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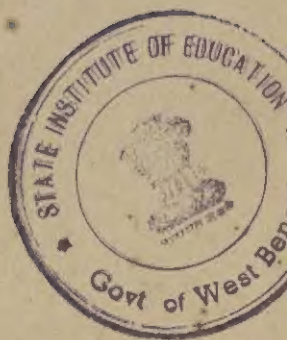
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ROMESH CHUNDER DUTT

BUILDERS OF MODERN INDIA

# ROMESH CHUNDER DUTT

R. C. DUTT



PUBLICATIONS DIVISION  
MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING  
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA



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## PREFACE

When I was invited by the Publications Division of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to write a biography of Romesh Chunder Dutt, I felt considerable hesitation to accept the assignment. My hesitation arose partly out of the fact that such an assignment, should I accept it, would constitute my first venture at authorship, but perhaps more because of my emotional attachment to the subject of the study. I have not had the good fortune of coming in contact personally with Romesh Dutt for he had passed away several years before I was born. As my grand-uncle, however, not a remote ancestor, an outstanding personality like Romesh Dutt has exercised considerable influence even after his death on me and on members of our family in the present generation. He has naturally been a model for us to follow, though few, if any, of us have been able to achieve even a small fraction of what he had achieved in the three score years of life allotted to him. Brought up in this atmosphere, my hesitation in undertaking to write his biography arose from the doubt whether I would be able to achieve the measure of detachment and objectivity necessary for the presentation of a true picture and a correct appraisal of his life and work.

What measure of objectivity I have been able to achieve is for my readers to judge. I am aware that this judgment is not likely to be unanimous, because, apart entirely from the personal emotional involvement of the writer, it is difficult to achieve unanimity in assessing the

contribution of an outstanding leader in the field of economics and politics. About Romesh Dutt's varied interests, his capacity for hard work and his outstanding contributions to the fields of literature and ancient Indian history there can be no difference of opinion. His contributions to Indian economic thought and to the political movement in the country are, however, in my opinion more outstanding still, and their importance is in no way reduced by the subsequent developments in economic and political thinking in India. A personality needs to be assessed on the background of the circumstances in which he lived and worked, and not on the basis of a comparison of his views with the views which gained acceptance later.

A few words about the biography itself may interest the reader. More space has been devoted to the period of Romesh Dutt's life after his retirement from the Indian Civil Service, though this was a period of only twelve years, than to the first 49 years of his life. This imbalance is deliberate, because the work done by Romesh Dutt during the last twelve years of his life had greater significance from the national point of view than the work done by him in the earlier period. It is true that he produced works of lasting value in literature and ancient history in the earlier period of his life, and the importance of the contribution he thus made to the cultural renaissance of the country should not be underestimated. It was, however, in the latter period of his life that he made his contribution to the field of economic administration and to the political movement which helped to arouse consciousness in the country of the

harmful effects of foreign rule on the economic well-being of the people. This consciousness in its turn led to intensification of the country's struggle to achieve her freedom.

Secondly, throughout the biography I have quoted profusely from Romesh Dutt's own writings and those of contemporary writers in order to present a realistic picture of facts and views in their contemporary setting. I feel that a personality can be better judged from what he writes and says himself, and from what others write and say of him at the time, than by a narrative presented by a writer a couple of generations later.

In concluding this Preface I must express my gratefulness to the Editorial Board not only for being kind to and patient with me, but even more so for asking me to undertake this work. It has given me great pleasure to delve into the past, and try to see our country as it was in the second half of the nineteenth and the first decade of the present century. To what extent we in the present generation after achieving the country's freedom have been able to live up to the hopes and expectations of the early sponsors of the freedom movement is a fascinating speculation which is forced on us by a study of the lives of the great men of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century.

My thanks are also due to my erstwhile colleague, Dr. Raj K. Nigam who has helped me very considerably in collecting materials for the biography and by discussing the manuscript with me. His constant encouragement and that of my daughter, Parvati, made my task considerably lighter.



Finally, I must mention with gratitude the help I have received from my Personal Assistant Shri K. N. Mathur who undertook as a labour of love to type the manuscript and arrange my papers.

The views expressed in the Biography are my own, as also are its shortcomings and its defects, and I must await the verdict of my indulgent readers on the work which I humbly present to them on this twentieth anniversary of our country's freedom, the thought and vision of which had inspired Romesh Dutt and the leaders of his generation to their life-long efforts.

R. C. DUTT

*Dated, New Delhi,  
The 15th August, 1967.*

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## CHAPTER I

### FAMILY AND ENVIRONMENT

The mid-nineteenth century when Romesh Dutt was born was a period of ferment in Bengal. It was a period when after years of political disintegration and intellectual inactivity new forces penetrated India, initially through Bengal, and caused an upheaval which gradually spread throughout the country and influenced its intellectual, religious, social and ultimately its political life. There had been European colonisers in earlier centuries, and even the British colonisation started in the South. It was, however, not till the Battle of Plassey in 1757 that British power attained a firm foothold in India and this country came into direct and intensive contact with the West. The centre of British authority at the time was round the port of Hooghly where the present city of Calcutta grew up. It was this area, therefore, that faced the first impact of Western culture, the fruits of which were evident early in the nineteenth century.

The significant contact with the West came with the spread of English education in India. As Dr. R. C. Majumdar has remarked—"The introduction of English education broke the barrier which had hitherto effectively shut India from the Western world."\* The first important step in this direction was taken in 1817 when the Hindu College was founded in Calcutta. The timing of this event, if not the precise date thereof, was remarkable, for it brought us into contact with the West when the West itself was undergoing

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\**The British Paramountcy and Indian Renaissance*, Part II, Chapter III

or had just undergone a profound intellectual change. In Europe in the eighteenth century, intellectual life was dominated by the spirit of rationalism and individualism generated by the French Masters which questioned traditional beliefs and constituted authorities. The French Revolution of 1789 had shattered old ideas, and provided the background for the nineteenth century "liberalism" of England. It was this new Age of Reason which burst on India after centuries of comparative intellectual inactivity when traditional beliefs flourished and formed the basis of religious, social and political life. It was natural, therefore, that the first effect of the impact, on those on whom it fell, was more radical than if the change had been gradually brought about from within, as it was in Europe.

There are stories of the excesses committed by the first generation of the students of Hindu College, who in the first flush of the impact were unable to assimilate the culture of the West and weave it into the pattern of Indian life, and who delighted in superficial imitation of Western life to prove their superiority to their "unenlightened" compatriots. They dressed in European attire, spoke and wrote in English, ate forbidden meat and threw remnants thereof into the houses of orthodox Indians to demonstrate their freedom from traditional beliefs. Large sections of orthodox Indians not only complained of, but were in fact alarmed at, these developments. One such complaint, which has been referred to by Dr. R. C. Majumdar in his essay on the "Impact of Western Culture", shows the absurdity to which such conduct often led, and bears repetition. "More serious is the charge made by another", he states, "that when he took his son, also a student of the Hindu College, to the temple of the goddess Kali at Kali-ghat, the boy, instead of prostrating himself before the



deity, like others, simply accosted her by saying 'Good morning, madam' ”.

Such excesses could not naturally last, and in Bengal they did not last beyond a generation. By the middle of the nineteenth century when Romesh Dutt was born the first effects of the impact had worn off, and there was a greater tendency towards synthesis of the Western values and Indian life, and a conscious effort to absorb them in the Indian pattern. A certain exaggerated attachment not only to Western ideas but also to the Western ways of life did indeed continue throughout the nineteenth century and even later, but more important and fundamental were the movements, religious, social, literary and ultimately political which sought to apply the Western methods of analysis based on reason to Indian thoughts and beliefs.

The earliest sponsor of this rationalistic movement was Raja Ram Mohun Roy who founded the Brahmo Samaj in 1828. The Raja's movement was, however, not that of an open revolt against either the Hindu religion or Hindu society. It applied the test of reason and tried to justify on this basis the basic tenets of Hinduism as prescribed in the old Hindu scriptures whose authority he accepted. The later accretions to Hindu practices he discarded, the most important of which was the "Sati" rite which was abolished by law with his powerful support in 1829. The leadership of the Brahmo Samaj movement was taken up after Raja Ram Mohun Roy by Maharsi Debendra Nath Tagore, and later by Keshab Chandra Sen. Keshab Sen, who was a person of great drive and dynamism, carried the movement forward into a new phase, and in the words of Bipin Chandra Pal "proclaimed the absolute supremacy of the individual conscience over every form of outside authority in the determination of human conduct, either of scriptures or

traditions or customs, however, immemorial or sanctified these may be."

While the Brahmo Samaj movement was a powerful movement of reform which had its impact on the social and cultural life of Bengal much beyond the limits of the Samaj, the first half of the nineteenth century also saw the beginnings of reformism within the fold of orthodox Hinduism. The most prominent social reformer in the field was Pandit Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820-1891) whose advocacy of widow remarriage in Hindu society shocked orthodox opinion all the more, because the Pandit never strayed from the Hindu fold and in many respects continued till the end of his life to remain a conventional and even an orthodox Hindu.

The influence of the West and the endeavour to pioneer new lines of thought was no less in evidence in the field of literature than it was in the organised fields of religion and social life. The most direct effect of the Western impact was in evidence in Michael Madhusudan Dutt (1824-73) who brought about a remarkable change both in the form and the spirit of Bengali poetry. His best known work, the *Meghnada-Vadha-Kabya*, which is based on an episode in the *Ramayana*, introduced for the first time the European blank verse form in Bengali poetry. His sonnets too followed the composition of English poets in style and conception, and enriched Bengali literature not by a superficial imitation of the West, but by absorbing in an Indian language the best traditions of Western literature. Others followed Madhusudan Dutt and reflected in their literary contributions the pioneering efforts of the age in diverse fields. One of the most outstanding of such contributions came from Bankim Chandra Chatterjee (1838-94) whose famous novel *Anand Math* with its political overtones and its renowned

*Bandemataram* has inspired the political movement to the present day.

A dynamic society is continually in the process of development. The movements initiated in the early nineteenth century in Bengal spread and developed in the latter part of the century and subsequently, and sometimes took entirely different courses. What is worthy of note, however, is that the first half of the nineteenth century witnessed the break-away from the period of comparative stagnation which, apart from movements restricted to certain parts of the country like the Sikh reform movement in the Punjab, the *Vaishnava* movement in Bengal and the Mahratta political movement in Western India, had marked Indian society for centuries.

It was in this atmosphere that Romesh Chunder Dutt was born on the 13th August 1848 in the well-known Dutt family of Rambagan. The founder of this family, Nilmoni Dutt, was born on the 3rd January 1757, the day on which Clive retook Calcutta, when, according to a family tradition, Nilmoni's parents were on their way migrating from their old ancestral home at Ajapur in Burdwan District to Calcutta. The family which Nilmoni Dutt founded produced some remarkable men and women, well-known in contemporary society for their culture and learning, who were among the first and most distinguished persons to absorb in themselves the impact of English education. One such was Rasamoy Dutt, son of Nilmoni Dutt. Writing about him, Romesh Dutt has stated : "He had a splendid collection of English books in his house, and infused in his sons that strong partiality for English literature which distinguishes the family to this day. . . . Rasamoy Dutt's life marks a transition in Hindu society, under English influence. He died shortly after the middle of the nineteenth century."

Rasamoy's son Govin Chunder and his nephew Soshee Chunder developed these traits further. According to Romesh Dutt, early in his life Govin Chunder "had published a volume of English verses; and these productions, together with some poems written by his cousin Soshee Chunder Dutt, received the well-deserved compliment of a favourable review in the *Blackwoods Magazine* in England. Two of the most remarkable scions of the Dutt family, however, were the two daughters of Govin Chunder, Aru Dutt and Toru Dutt, both of whom died in their early twenties. Toru Dutt's main work, *A Sheaf Gleaned in French Fields*, was a rendering in English of the French lyrics of the romantic school, of which the well-known critic, Edmund Gosse, said that "if modern French literature were entirely lost, it might not be found impossible to reconstruct a great number of poems from the Indian version." The *Ancient Ballads of Hindusthan* and other poems earned equal praise from Edmund Gosse, so that when Toru Dutt died he wrote :

"It is difficult to exaggerate when we try to estimate what we have lost by the premature death of Toru Dutt. Literature has no honours which need have been beyond the grasp of a girl, who at the age of twenty-one, and in languages separated from her own by so deep a chasm, had produced so much of lasting worth".

Romesh Chunder's father was Isan Chunder, but he died in an accident when Romesh Dutt was about thirteen years old. His uncle Soshee Chunder acted as his guardian and had a profound influence on Romesh Chunder. Both Isan Chunder and Soshee Chunder were products of Hindu College. Isan Chunder's essays and poems, written while he was a student of Hindu College, were published after his death and showed love for literary pursuits. He studied medicine, but later took up appointment under Government



Deputy Collector. He was employed in various Districts of Bengal, mainly on survey work, and met with an accident in the course of his tour in Kusthia on 8th May 1861 when he was drowned at the early age of forty-three.

Soshee Chunder, under whose guardianship Romesh was placed on his father's death, had all the brilliance and cultural traits which had distinguished several members of the Rambagan Dutt family. Himself a product of the Hindu College, he shared his family's love for literature and, as noticed earlier, along with his cousin Govin Chunder earned the praise of the *Blackwoods Magazine* in England for his poems. According to the *Indian Echo*, "the success of Soshee Chunder Dutt as a writer lay in the extreme ease and felicity of his style, directness of narrative, brilliant diction, quiet humour, and chaste sentiment."

Romesh Chunder Dutt was thus born not only at a time when, with the introduction of English education, new influences were at work in Bengal, but also in a family the members of which had greatly imbibed this new education, and had reacted to it with considerable brilliance. It is true that their talents were devoted largely to literary pursuits, and did not spread themselves to other fields, such as economic and political, which in later years engaged the serious attention of Romesh Chunder; but the cultural atmosphere, the freedom from unreasoning belief in traditions and the general emancipation which the family achieved provided an appropriate background for the further efforts in diverse fields which characterised this distinguished member of the Dutt family.

## CHAPTER II

### BOYHOOD DAYS

Romesh Chunder Dutt was one of the four sons and two daughters born to their parents Isan Chunder Dutt and Thakamani. Of the brothers and sisters, Romesh Chunder was most attached to his elder brother, Jogesh Chunder, who was only about thirteen months older than him in age. The two were brought up together and remained life-long friends. Correspondence between the two brothers, which was maintained throughout their lives, throws a good deal of light not only on several incidents in Romesh Chunder's life but also on his views on several important matters and indeed on his outlook on life.

Romesh Chunder lost his father, as has been noticed, in an accident, when he was about thirteen years old. His mother had died two years earlier. In their very early days when their father was still alive, the two brothers, Jogesh and Romesh, spent their days in various Districts of Bengal and studied at various schools in these Districts. Both the brothers in later life recorded reminiscences of these early boyhood days, a connected narrative of which is found in the writings of the elder brother, Jogesh Chunder. According to this narrative, the education of the two brothers began in a *pathsala* in Calcutta, from which they migrated to a Bengali school, and thence to the Hare School, founded by the well-known English educationist, David Hare. But their studies in Calcutta schools were not continuous. After spending some time at District schools at Kumarkhali and Murshidabad, the two brothers came back again to Calcutta, and then in 1857 were admitted to a school at Pabna.

Of their days at Pabna, Jogesh Dutt has recorded as follows :

"At Pabna, we were placed in school soon after our arrival there, where we studied for about a year. In the annual examination my brother obtained, I believe, the first prize in our class. After the examination, we were withdrawn from school and a private tutor was employed to teach us. At Pabna we learnt to ride. We had a horse but no saddle. We used to ride after the fashion of the country, on "*gadis*" (cloth saddle). At Pabna we witnessed the assumption of Government by Queen Victoria from the East India Company. When we were on the eve of leaving Pabna, an incident happened which showed my brother's presence of mind and pluck even when he was a child. We and two other boys were playing with a small wooden trunk into which one of us got and the lid was closed from outside. When my turn came, my brother was at a little distance from the place, the other two boys closed the lid and fastened the chain. In a little while I began to gasp for breath and called aloud to have the lid opened and at the same time pushed up the lid from inside. This only tightened the chain which the other two boys could not unfasten. My brother heard my cry and ran up and pressed the lid down, and so unfastened the chain and opened the trunk to my great relief."

Romesh Chunder Dutt has also recorded his own reminiscences of these early days.

"I had occasion in early life to visit various Districts in Bengal with my father, who was employed as Deputy Collector, and the recollections of those early days are among the pleasantest reminiscences of my life".

Talking of his days in Pabna, where he spent two years, Romesh Dutt writes :

"These were eventful days, for the Mutiny had broken

out in the North-West, and every week brought fresh news about the incidents of the war. A company of British soldiers was stationed in Pabna, and occasionally these soldiers committed outrages in the place which gave rise to much complaint. It was a relief to the town when the Mutiny was over and the soldiers left the place. Before leaving they had a theatrical performance playing "Macbeth". I had learnt the story from my father, and I shall never forget the interest with which I witnessed the theatrical performance for the first time in my life."

Of himself in those early boyhood days, Romesh Dutt has recorded—

"I did fairly well in Pabna school, and carried away a prize, but can scarcely say I deserved it. For we were wild boys, my elder brother and I, and delighted in play and mischief the whole day long ! We rejoiced in open-air exercise and often walked from our house to the shore of the great Padma river and watched with wonder its vast sea-like expanse, its rapid current, its waves and whirlpools. It was generally pretty late in the evening before we returned home, tired with the long walk, but refreshed in body and mind."

On the 8th May, 1861, Romesh Chunder's father, Isan Chunder, died. Romesh Chunder and his elder brother, Jogesh Chunder, were then living in Calcutta. Their mother had died two years earlier. On their father's death, they came under the guardianship of their uncle, Soshee Chunder Dutt. Writing about this, Jogesh Chunder Dutt has stated :

"On the death of our father, our uncle Babu Shoshee Chunder Dutt came to live in our house in order to bring us up. He too used to sit at night with us and our favourite study used to be pieces from the works of the English poets. Two very important lessons my brother learnt

from our uncle—independence of character and thirst for literary fame. Nothing disturbed this life we led with our uncle”.

In December, 1864, Romesh Dutt passed his Entrance Examination from Hare School, Calcutta, standing first among the students who passed from that school. He obtained a scholarship of Rs. 14 a month. Earlier in the same year, before he passed the Entrance Examination, he was married to Matangini (Mohini) Bose. The marriage was arranged by the guardians according to strict Hindu orthodox ideas, and both the bride and the bridegroom were mere children when they were married. The marriage, however, brought them real happiness throughout their long married life of about forty-five years. Six children were born to them, five daughters and a son.

On passing the Entrance Examination, Romesh Dutt was admitted to the Presidency College, the leading College in Bengal at the time. Two years later, he passed the First Arts Examination, standing second among the successful candidates. He obtained a scholarship of Rs. 32.

Of his college days, Sir Gurudas Banerjea, one of the most eminent men of his time in Bengal, has recorded the following incident :

“I made the acquaintance of Romesh Chunder in the year 1865, when he was a student in the first year class of the Presidency College. I had just been appointed an Assistant Professor of Mathematics. I used to set a few questions for the students to answer at home. On two successive occasions Dutt had not done his home task. On my asking him the reason for his failure, he told me he had no taste for Mathematics and found the work uncongenial. I took him aside and spoke to him gently : ‘For the Mathematics you have to do,’ I said, ‘you do not really want the genius of a Newton or Laplace. You have only to make



up your mind to get through your work and it will be done.' He said nothing in reply, but I saw my rebuke had sunk deep. From that day I noticed the young student showed very satisfactory progress in my subject. I was very young myself, and had just been out from College, and for Romesh Chunder to take my advice in such good part and turn it to such good account, was to my mind a proof of his good sense and strength of purpose. It struck me then that the young student had in him stuff of which great men are made."

His early education in India, with its bias for English literature, and for contemporary European thought, had created in Romesh Chunder a desire to complete his education in England. He was determined to compete for the Indian Civil Service, for which only one Indian had so far competed successfully. That was Satyendra Nath Tagore, an elder brother of the poet Rabindranath. It was a difficult ambition to achieve not only because the competition was one of the stiffest, if not the stiffest, in the world at the time, but more so because any plan to cross the seas and travel to Europe was bound to meet with the strongest opposition from relations and friends. And so it was in the case of Romesh Chunder. The plan had to be developed in secret as a conspiracy, and no one except his elder brother, Jogesh Chunder, was taken into confidence. Romesh Chunder had, however, two friends who had similar ambitions, Surendranath Banerjea and Bihari Lal Gupta. Of the three, only Surendranath Banerjea had the permission of his parents, while Romesh Chunder and Bihari Lal had to run away from home under the cover of night. The berths were booked in the name of Surendranath Banerjea and "two friends" and on the 3rd March, 1868, the three left Calcutta for what was to them the most momentous adventure of their lives.

The feelings of Romesh Chunder as he embarked on this adventure can be best described in his own words as he wrote, during his voyage, to his brother, Jogesh Chunder:

"But as we sat for hours together on the deck watching this nightly scene, other thoughts than those suggested by the scene oft arose in our minds. For we have left our home and our country unknown to our friends, unknown to those who are nearest and dearest to us, staking our future, staking all, on success in an undertaking which past experience has proved to be more than difficult. The least hint about our plans would have effectually stopped our departure; our guardians would never have consented to our crossing the seas; our wisest friends would have considered it madness to venture on an impossible undertaking. Against such feelings, and against the voice of experience and reason, we have set out in this difficult undertaking—stealthily leaving our homes—recklessly staking everything on an almost impossible success. Shall we achieve that success? Or shall we come back to our country, impoverished, socially cut off from our countrymen, and disappointed in our hopes, to face the reproaches of advisers and the regrets of our friends? These thoughts oft arose in our minds in the solemn stillness of the night, and the prospect before us seemed to be gloomier than the gloomy sky and the gloomy sea around us, without a ray of hope to enlighten the dark prospect."

## CHAPTER III

### THREE YEARS IN EUROPE

Romesh Chunder Dutt and his two friends arrived in England in April 1868 and immersed themselves immediately in their studies for the Indian Civil Service Competition. The Competition was stiff and consisted of examinations in a number of subjects—both written and *viva-voce*. Candidates were judged by the aggregate marks they obtained in the subjects they offered for the examination. Romesh Dutt offered five subjects, namely, English (including History and Composition), Mathematics, Mental Philosophy, Natural Philosophy and Sanskrit. In regard to Sanskrit, however, which carried the full marks of only 500, the Indian candidates suffered a disadvantage. Romesh Chunder referred to this in writing to his brother as follows :

“But here we are at a disadvantage as compared with English students. For they take up Latin and Greek—the full marks in those subjects are 1500—and English students easily get more marks in those subjects than we can possibly do in Sanskrit”.

Such a disadvantage did not, however, daunt Romesh Chunder, and he did not in fact seriously complain of it. He took up studies in the University College, London, where he spent most of his time. He also took private lessons from some of the Professors of the College, of whose kindness and assistance he has paid eloquent testimony. Of one of them, in particular, Mr. Henry Morley, he stated :

“I have never known a kinder, a more genuine and true-hearted Englishman than Mr. Henry Morley, Pro-

fessor of English Literature. We attended his classes, we took private lessons from him, we shared his hospitality, and we benefited by his kind, friendly, and ever-helpful advice. His house is as well known to us as our own, and his study—the walls of which, on every side, are lined with books—has been the scene of many a pleasant hour of instruction and advice.”

The regard which Romesh Dutt had for his Professor was fully reciprocated by the latter, for in writing about Romesh Chunder and his friends, Professor Morley stated :

“They came to this country well-educated, were liberal of mind, most friendly to England, amiable, upright and indefatigably hard-working men, in character and general attainment answering to the best class of English students. They worked steadily for at least twelve, usually fourteen, fifteen, sixteen hours a day, as men well might who had staked so much as they were staking on success in the required examination”.

The hard work paid, for when the results of the Competitive Examination of 1869 were announced, Romesh Dutt not only figured among the successful candidates, but stood third in order of merit. His two friends, Surendranath Banerjea and Beharilal Gupta, were also successful, as also a fourth Indian, Sripad Babaji Thakur of Bombay. This was no mean achievement for the four Indians who, in the words of Professor Morley, had to “maintain themselves alone in a strange country, for the chance—which experience declared to be a bad chance—of beating two or three hundred Englishmen on their own ground in their own subjects of study”.

In the midst of the heavy preoccupation and the besetting anxiety for the Competitive Examination during 1868, however, Romesh Dutt found time to travel and observe closely the country he found himself in. In fact, his fondness

for travel and his acute power of observation of which he gave ample evidence in later life manifested themselves early in his student-life. During the summer of 1868 he travelled extensively in Scotland and recorded his impression in graphic terms. Of special interest are his observations on the British political system which he had the opportunity to observe closely when the general elections were held during November of that year. His love of representative institutions which was so clearly manifested in his later life was greatly influenced by, if it was not born of, his observations in Britain as a student. Referring to the widespread interest which the British people took in their own affairs, he remarked: "Among such a people, as may be expected, most improvements emanate from the people, for the people are the Government". "Such is England", he stated later, "a country where people govern themselves—what wonder if such a people have secured for themselves an amount of political liberty which is nowhere else to be found on the face of the globe, America alone excepted...."

After his success in the Competitive Examination of 1869, Romesh Dutt had greater opportunities to travel not only in Britain but also on the Continent of Europe and he availed himself of these in full measure. He travelled extensively over Great Britain and Ireland, in France, Switzerland and Italy, and has left behind a detailed account of the journeys in one of his earliest works, *Three Years in Europe*. These accounts reveal not only his acute powers of observation and his vast knowledge of European history and civilisation, but also depict two important traits in his character. The first was his deep concern for the poor and the lowly, and the second his patriotic yearning to transplant the best in Europe on his home soil.

His admiration of the progress which Britain had made,



spécially in developing representative institutions in the country, did not blind Romesh Chunder to the conditions of the poor. "Notwithstanding many noble qualities", he remarked, "the lower classes of England are in many respects very far from what they ought to be, and their character is soiled by some of the worst vices of human nature. Drunkenness and cruelty to wives prevail to a fearful extent among them, their independence often borders on insolence, and this remarkable imprudence makes them wretched . . . . . Pestered and bothered by a hungry wife and starving children, the drunken husband and father often has recourse to violence, the accounts of which, emanating every day from the police courts, fail to startle the people only on account of their frequency".

Again, observing the peasantry in Ireland, he stated : "As for the villagers, they are poor indeed. Man, wife and children, a good round number in all, are often seen working in the same field, in sun and rain, and are housed together in the night, probably with their pigs and geese, in the same wretched hut." In an obvious reference to his own country, he concluded : "This is not the only fertile country in which the cultivators are exceedingly poor".

Of his patriotism and his broad vision for his country, Romesh Dutt gave remarkable evidence at this early stage of his life. Writing in the columns of *The Asiatic* in November 1870, he observed : "The time has surely arrived when the fair principle of representation may be introduced in the Indian Government; when the many obstacles to Indians holding responsible situations may gradually be removed; then an Indian militia and a corps of volunteers may be raised to guard the soil. . . . ."

Even more remarkable was the sentiment he expressed in a letter to his brother in 1871 towards the end of his stay in Europe. "And I hope", he wrote, "as we become

more familiar with Europe and with England, we shall adopt some great virtues and some noble institutions which are conspicuous in Europe in the present day, and which we need so much. Our children's children will live to see the day when India will take her place among the nations of the earth in manufacturing industry and commercial enterprise, in representative institutions and real social advancement. May that day dawn early for India".

Written nearly a century ago, these words could well represent what in our generation, that of Romesh Chunder's children's children, we are striving to achieve. He saw this vision and dreamt of a new India in terms which are relevant today, but of which there was not even a faint indication then.

"The child is the father of the man", according to a well-known English saying. Romesh Chunder's three years in Europe in his early youth, though not in childhood, certainly gave unmistakable signs of the man he grew up to be. The contact with Europe and the impressions he gained there during these years gave to his earnest and patriotic mind, as it did to several others in succeeding generations, a measure of the backwardness of his country, and instilled in him the desire to see his country progress on similar lines. He saw representative institutions flourish in England and he naturally asked himself why they should not flourish in India. He saw Europe forging ahead in industry and commerce and he yearned for similar progress in India.

The three years from April 1868 to July 1871 could not have been better spent. During this period, Romesh Chunder, who had travelled to a strange land, secured the third place in a highly competitive examination. He qualified for the Bar; and stood second in the final probationary examination; he travelled extensively in England and on the Continent of Europe, and learnt to appreciate the perma-

ment values of Western culture; above all, he saw his own country in a new light and his patriotism acquired a new fervour and an added urgency. He wanted his fellow countrymen to share his experience, and thus help the country to progress on modern lines. As he said shortly after his return to India: "I do not, indeed, wish you to slavishly imitate everything English, but I do think that there are many things estimable in English manners which we may with advantage introduce into our own social institutions. I would, therefore, beg of you, gentlemen, to try your best to send as many young men as possible to England, for there they would imbibe ideas of liberty and equality between men and women."

## CHAPTER IV

### EARLY OFFICIAL AND LITERARY CAREER

On the 28th September 1871, Romesh Chunder Dutt was appointed Assistant Magistrate of Alipur. Thus began an experiment which, with one solitary exception, namely that of Satyendra Nath Tagore who had entered the Indian Civil Service earlier, had no precedent. It was an experiment not only in the sphere of British administration in India, but in the entire field of Indo-British relationship. There were genuine doubts among British administrators, born no doubt of a deep-seated prejudice against a conquered race, if any Indian, however well-educated and talented, could be competent enough to shoulder the responsibilities of higher administration which had hitherto been discharged by their own countrymen. This doubt, however ill-founded, was genuine enough, but it was not the sole reason for the hesitation to admit Indians to the higher levels of the Civil Service. There were at least two other reasons, more fundamental and, from the point of view of the then rulers, perhaps more important. There was a reluctance, equally deep-rooted, to admit any Indian to a position of authority in spheres in which members of the ruling nation came in contact with the administration. An instance of this was quoted by Sir William Hunter in his speech in the Indian Council in March 1883 when he said:

"On the 17th January last, a native civilian was, in the ordinary course, appointed Joint Magistrate, with powers of a Magistrate of the first class, at the important station of Dacca. On the 23rd January, he received a letter from the Secretary to the Bengal Government, cancelling the

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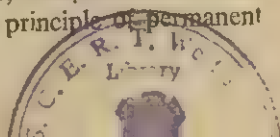
appointment and transferring him to a less eligible district, on the ground that the opening out of the Dacca and Mymensingh railway was bringing a number of Europeans into Dacca district."

Obviously, no Indian could exercise high magisterial authority in a District where there was a substantial European population!

A deeper reason still was the suspicion in which the Indians who had their roots in the country were held by the rulers. No Indian could be trusted in the inner recesses of the administration, to share power with the ruling group. Lack of trust in Indians in vital spheres of administration was demonstrated by the fact that while Indians were allowed to hold comparatively important assignments in certain spheres, including judicial, there was considerable reluctance to admit them to key positions of responsibility. This is well illustrated by what a leading contemporary Anglo-Indian journal, *The Pioneer*, wrote on the 20th October 1882 :

"The administration of Districts means the government of the country. . . . . All reasonable men know, of course, that natives are perfectly well qualified to be judges. And no political difficulties arise in connection with their tenure of judicial appointments. But the executive line is another matter altogether. It may be doubted whether the literature of the subject would yield any serious defence of the position that the natives ought to be put in charge of districts."

And yet it must be conceded that these doubts and suspicions, these political considerations conflicted with the liberal instincts of the British rulers and presented a dilemma to them. The Queen's Proclamation had promised equality of status to all Her Majesty's subjects, irrespective of colour and creed, and had thus enshrined a principle of permanent





value regardless of immediate political considerations. In doing so, the British rulers had shown a measure of progressiveness which was rare in that age of naked and avowed imperialism. In practice, however, political considerations could not be ignored. The dilemma was well described by the Anglo-Indian journal referred to earlier in course of the same article :

“The present Government has, for some time past, been alive to the fact that, before long, it would practically have to choose between one of the two courses forced on its election by the progress of time. It would either have to deny promotion to native civilians, however fairly they might have earned it—however pressing their claims, as derived from ability combined with seniority—or it will have to violate the principle on which British administration of India has so far been founded, and put the executive political authority of the State into the hands of native officials.”

It was in this atmosphere that Romesh Chunder Dutt entered the service of the British Crown in India along with his two friends, Surendra Nath Banerjea and Behari Lal Gupta. The British Government found grounds within the next few years to dismiss Surendranath from the Service. The subsequent career of Surendranath Banerjea, who became one of the pioneers of Indian nationalism and rose to be the President of the Indian National Congress, only served to demonstrate what the British administration lost in Indian talent on account of racial prejudice and political considerations. Beharilal Gupta had a distinguished career in the judiciary of Bengal, but Romesh Dutt elected for the executive, hitherto the close preserve of the ruling race. He thus chose for himself the task of breaking through well-rooted prejudices and settled political principles, and in this

task he had nothing but his capacity for hard work and his own merit to rely on. Early in his career, he had discarded subservience to authority as a means of advancement in service, but he more than made up for it by displaying a genius for administration which the most prejudiced critic of Indian administrators could not deny.

After his initial appointment as Assistant Magistrate, Alipur, Romesh Chunder Dutt had several other assignments until the famine of 1874 when he was appointed Relief Officer, Meherpur, in the District of Nadia. In this post he distinguished himself and was officially commended for good work. At the same time, however, he developed differences with the British planters of the District which threatened to retard his career.

In a letter to his elder brother he referred to this episode in words, characteristically his, which throw a flood of light on his attitude towards personal advancement in life even at this early stage of his career. He wrote : "But one has no resource but to receive fortune's smiles and buffets with equal grace. My own prospect is not very bright. When I was last at Krishnagar, Mr. Stevens informed me that I had a fair chance of being an Officiating Joint Magistrate within a year. The representations of the planters have, I have reasons to know, prejudiced both the Magistrate and the Commissioner, and it may be years before I am recommended to be a Joint. But I feel a pride in being thus a martyr to my duty. I was not born to wealth or to good fortune, but I live to do my duty, and that inspires me with an exaltation to which rich men's pleasures are nothing."

The most difficult assignment at this stage of his career came to Romesh Dutt in 1876 when he was sent to Dakshin Shabbazpur to fight the after-effects of a devastating cyclone which followed in the wake of the famine of 1874. The

conditions in this island as he found them when he arrived there in November 1876 can best be described in his own words :

"No battlefield could be more dismal and more shocking. The huts of the people had been swept clean away, and the remnants of the population were living under temporary sheds or under trees. Numerous families had disappeared altogether, and there was scarcely any which did not lose some of its members. Grief itself was silenced, for the calamity had been so awful, so instantaneous and so universal, that the survivors were rather stunned than given to sorrowing, and I heard no sound of wail or lamentation. The land was sprinkled with the dead, and the dead putrefying bodies caused no emotion, no disgust."

Inevitably, a disaster of this magnitude was followed by another, namely, epidemic. Describing this, Romesh Dutt wrote :

"The island was now overtaken by another calamity scarcely less fatal than what had preceded. The numberless carcasses of men and cattle had polluted the air and contaminated the tank, and a cholera epidemic broke out, the like of which I have never witnessed, nor would like to see again. It spread in every village and affected almost every homestead, and created a universal alarm. It swept away the survivors of the storm-wave in many homesteads, and the homesteads became deserted."

These conditions were sufficient to test the capacity of any administrator, and it is a tribute to the administrative ability and devotion of Romesh Dutt that he was able to bring relief to the suffering humanity and earn the love and respect of a grateful people. Referring to his services, the *Hindoo Patriot* of the 8th July, 1877, stated :

"Every machinery or agency at his command is being utilised for the purpose, and all concerned seem to be an-

xious to help the people out of the present difficulty. With the greatest economy and least noise, he is carrying out a scheme which would have cost others double the amount, and we only hope that Government will support him in his generous endeavours. Calm, considerate, and bold, Mr Dutt is a quiet sort of a man, and has his work uppermost in his heart. But for him the subdivision would hardly have recovered. We earnestly hope his endeavours will be crowned with success. We pray to God that he may live a long life, and earn the approbation of Government and his countrymen."

After about a year and a half of arduous labour, Romesh Dutt left the island in April 1878. His work had merited recognition by Government, and it is to the credit of the administration of the day that after certain other postings of short duration Romesh Chunder was given charge of the District of Bankura for three months in 1881 and again of the District of Balasore for a further period of three months in 1882. Finally, in December 1882, in spite of racial prejudices Government approved of Romesh Dutt's selection for the Executive Branch of the Service, and thus conceded in practice the principle that Indian officers of merit could, equally with their British colleagues, hold executive charge of Districts. Though one would be inclined in the present day to ridicule the magnitude of the "concession", and to regard the then prevailing attitude as one of unreasonable prejudice characteristic of an imperial regime, which undoubtedly it was, the strength of the feeling as it then existed was intense and it needed a person of the merit and stature of Romesh Dutt to break through it and introduce a measure of rationality in the relations between the British rulers and the Indian subjects.

The decisions to appoint Romesh Dutt as Magistrate of Balasore and later to the Executive Branch of the Service

were commented upon by various Anglo-Indian journals, one of which, commenting on the former decision and grudgingly admitting his suitability for the post, stated: "However, one swallow does not make a summer, and the appointment of the officiating Magistrate of Balasore has raised—not settled—the great question to be decided" (the great question, of course, being whether or not Indians should hold executive charge of Districts).

## II

Inspite of the hard labour that Ramesh Dutt had to put in the administrative sphere to make his mark and prove to the then Administration that Indians were capable of discharging high administrative responsibilities, he found time even in this early phase of his career to indulge in his "first love", namely, literary pursuits. Literature was indeed his first love, and in its various aspects he pursued it with great devotion throughout his life. A critical assessment of the contribution he made as a writer to the reawakening of the Indian mind to the glories of our past, to our desire for democratic freedom, and to the consciousness of our abject economic position under the British rule, must be reserved for a subsequent chapter. It would suffice here, in order to appreciate his literary and scholastic works as they appeared throughout his life, to consider the main objects which guided his endeavours, for literary pursuit was for him not merely a matter of self-expression or a spontaneous outpouring of his heart. It had certain definite objects.

The first was to recall to his countrymen the past glories of our ancient land, the richness of our heritage, and thus create in the present generation a faith in our future. As he himself put it, his ambition was to belong "to that band of noble hearted patriots and gifted men who have taught

us to regard our past religion and history and literature with legitimate and manly admiration. For our first and greatest indebtedness for the progress of this half-century is to those who have brought us to have faith in ourselves."

The second object which inspired many of his works was to place a true picture of India before the Western world, specially before the ruling nation. He had faith in democracy and he believed that British democracy could not be unfair to India if the correct picture of India was placed before the British people. This explains why, inspite of his love for his own language, he composed most of his works in English. He realised that no Indian, however gifted, could win for himself a permanent place in English literature. It was not such a position that he sought, but he wished through his works to wipe out the distorted picture which die-hard imperialists often painted to justify not only British rule as such, but the various reactionary and anti-national policies which the rulers often pursued.

The third and last object of his scholastic endeavours was to supplement his efforts in other fields, official and later political, and establish the theoretical background for certain policies, political and economic, which he wanted the Government of the day to adopt.

In considering the last two objectives, however, it should be remembered that the last quarter of the nineteenth and the first decade of the twentieth century when Romesh Dutt lived and worked was not the period in Indian history when the British connection as such was questioned. The great uprising of 1857 had been quelled by the rulers, and the British rule came thereafter to be accepted as inevitable, if not for the good of the country. It was not in fact till the partition of Bengal created an



apsurge of national feeling and gave rise to the terrorist movement, mainly in Bengal and the Punjab, that the British connection as such was questioned. Even so, the earlier nationalist movement did not envisage complete severance of the British connection, and it was only in the late twenties of the present century that complete independence or "Purna Swaraj" became an ideal largely accepted. But these events were still to come. In the younger days of Romesh Dutt allegiance to the British Crown was generally accepted, and it is no wonder that on various occasions he asserted his loyalty to the Crown. In fact, he described the British Empire as a "superb institution" and, while criticising various acts of omission and commission of the Government and advancing various radical suggestions, he took care to say that these suggestions would in fact strengthen and not weaken the British connection. It was, therefore, not his object to subvert British rule in India. His object was to advance the nation to a higher stage of political and economic development so that India could in due course function as an equal partner like the then White Dominions of the British Empire.

The first published work of Romesh Dutt was his *Three Years in Europe* which appeared in 1872. Initially, the book recorded his impressions and observations during his three years' stay in Europe from 1868 to 1871. Later editions, however, contained impressions of his subsequent visits to Europe. The book is noteworthy as depicting his interests and his sensitive observations. His main interest lay in political and social institutions of the countries he visited, and these he described in some detail. His interest in history is also evident by his account of the historical background to some of the towns and cities he saw. But the work was not essentially one of scholarship. He

had an eye for the beauties of nature, and his descriptions of picturesque sceneries of Scotland and Switzerland revealed him as a sensitive traveller capable of enjoying the good things of life.

The first characteristic work of Romesh Dutt was, however, his *Peasantry of Bengal* which was published in 1875. The remarkable feature of this book was not merely his detailed knowledge of the problems of the peasants, but his active interest in their welfare which led him to a suggestion which was not only against the current policy of the then Government, but was also regarded as contrary to the interests of perhaps the most influential section of the then Indian community, namely the Zamindars. He was fully aware of the hostility which was likely to be created, and in a letter to his brother he stated :

"I think to pass judgments on the policy of English legislators is considered too bold a step; and to advocate the cause of the *raiyats* against the Zamindars may be viewed in a still worse light. Yet I cannot and will not put fetters on my tongue; promotion in the service I do not much care for, and I will not be sorry if the publication of the *Bengal Peasantry* injures my prospects somewhat."

There were reasons for the apprehension that the book would not be welcome to the authorities. The book appeared at a time when agrarian discontent in the Districts of Pabna and Nadia had already attracted attention. After describing the reasons for this unrest Romesh Dutt stated categorically :

"There are two ways open to Government : to put down the general awakening and to leave the *raiyats* once more at the mercy of the Zamindars, as has been done times without number from 1793 to 1859, or to take a more enlightened and intelligent view of the general rising,

and to newly create, in a more satisfactory manner than has yet been done, a definite status of the *raiya*t and a definite status of the Zamindar."

The enlightened and intelligent step that he suggested was "to enact a Permanent Settlement between the Zamindar and the *raiya*t, as a Permanent Settlement has been enacted between the Zamindars and the Government." "Our rulers will not, cannot," he stated, "once more degrade the *raiya*t to his pristine position of servitude under the Zamindars—the only other measure then to heal the ill-feeling between the two classes, and to put a stop to the mass litigation that is eating into the very vitals of an agricultural population, is to raise the status of the *raiya*ts. Let the rates of rent now payable be carefully ascertained after an extensive survey, and let such rents be fixed for ever."

The remarkable feature of this book lies not in the specific suggestion it offers, but in its approach to the problem. Whether a permanent settlement between the *raiya*t and the Zamindar was practicable or even a desirable proposition might well be open to debate. What was more significant, however, was the fact that for the first time a highly educated person holding a position of authority in Government had espoused the cause of the peasants against the Zamindars. This significant fact was not lost on contemporary opinion, and *The Hindoo Patriot* published an article under the heading "Revolutionary" to denounce Romesh Dutt's views. In a characteristically patronising tone the article began :

"Babu Romesh Chunder Dutt is full of promise of future excellence, but we are sorry to observe in him the same spirit of radicalism that marked the thoughts and utterances of the first alumni of the Hindu College . . . . Our young men who lived a few years in England have

returned to India with new fangled ideas and opinions  
.....”

Romesh Dutt then turned from contemporary economics to the history of literature and published a little book on the *Literature of Bengal*. This was also a characteristic work of the author, for he endeavoured in this book to dispel the current view held mainly by Western observers that Bengali literature had nothing worthwhile to write about. On the other hand, by tracing the history of Bengali literature from the lyricism of the twelfth to the fifteenth century, through the classical period beginning from the sixteenth century, to the more recent developments in the nineteenth century portraying the influence of Western literature, Romesh Dutt gave to the Bengalees a pride in their literary heritage.

Of special interest to his contemporaries and to succeeding generations was his estimate of the renaissance movement in the nineteenth century Bengal which had a powerful effect on Bengali literature. “Every revolution”, he said, “is attended with vigour, and the present one is no exception to the rule. Nowhere in the annals of Bengali literature are so many or so bright names found crowded together in the limited space of one century as those of Ram Mohun Roy, Akhai Kumar Dutt, Iswar Chunder Vidyasagar, Iswar Chunder Gupta, Madhu Sudhan Dutt, Hem Chunder Banerjee, Bankim Chunder Chatterjea, and Dina Bandhu Mitter. Within three quarters of the present century, prose, blank verse, historical fiction and drama have been introduced for the first time in the Bengali literature, and works of imagination written which leave the highest and best efforts of previous centuries far behind.”

The book was noticed in the Press, including the Anglo-Indian press of the day. *The Englishman* wrote :

“It will surprise many to learn that Bengali has a lite-

rature worth writing about..... But Bengali has a literature, dating from the fourteenth century, full of interest not only to the student, but also to the general readers. We need not follow Mr. Dutt through the other chapters of his interesting volume. It is sufficient to refer those of our readers who wish to know the inner life, the thoughts, the feeling, the real life of Bengal—not the bastard imitation of English habits and, too often, English vices which floats like a scum on the surface of our great cities—to his book.”

But Romesh Dutt was not content merely to record the history of Bengali literature. He wanted to join the select band of litterateurs of the nineteenth century Bengal to whom he had referred so eloquently in his *Literature of Bengal* and make his own contribution to that literature. Writing to his brother on this subject, he said : “My own mother tongue must be my mine, and before I die I hope to leave what will enrich the language and will continue to please my countrymen after I die.”

His ambition to make a substantial contribution to Bengali literature owed its inspiration to the greatest Bengali literary figure of the nineteenth century, Bankim Chunder Chatterjee. Bankim Chunder was a close friend of his father, and Romesh Dutt had the highest regard and respect for him. According to Romesh Dutt’s biographer, J. N. Gupta, it was Bankim Chunder who while discussing Romesh Chunder’s plans and ambitions with him suggested that he should contribute in Bengali to the well-known Bengali magazine of the time, *Banga Darshan* (*Life and Work of Romesh Chunder Dutt* by J. N. Gupta p.68). “Write in Bengali!”, exclaimed Mr. Dutt, “but I hardly know the Bengali literary style.” “Style!”, rejoined Bankim Chunder, “whatever a cultured man like you will write

will be style. If you have a gift in you, style will come of itself."

Romesh Chunder took this advice to heart, and the result was four historical novels covering a hundred years of Indian history from the middle of the sixteenth century to the reign of Aurangzeb. The first two, namely, *Banga Bijeta* (Conqueror of Bengal) and *Madhab: Kankan* (Bracelet of Flowers), relate to Akbar's conquest of Bengal. The third, *Rajput Jiban Sandhya* (Evening of Rajput Life), is based on the heroic struggles of Rana Pratap; and the fourth, *Maharashtra Jiban Prabhat* (Dawn of Maharashtra Life) describes the rise of Maratha power under Sivaji, perhaps the greatest military genius of India's recorded history.

History was a passion with Romesh Chunder, and it is no wonder that Scott was his favourite English author. Turning to his own language he thought of history again and wrote historical novels in the style of Scott. But it was not merely the natural bias of his mind that made him a historical novelist. In writing such fiction he had the same object that inspired several of his other works, namely to recall to the present generation the glories of the past. As he himself put it in one of his novels: "Gentle reader, my sole object has been to narrate the glories of our past and the greatness of our national heroes. If I have succeeded in kindling a single spark of love and admiration for our national heroes, then not in vain did I take up my pen."

Among the literary men of nineteenth-century Bengal, Romesh Dutt has an assured and permanent place. He may not have risen to the heights of Bankim Chunder as a novelist, but as a contemporary pointed out: "Mr. R. C. Dutt yields to no writer of our day in the flights of his imagination, in the loftiness of his conceptions and in



the symmetry and consistency of the scenes and events untold by him." Along with several other writers who preceded him, Romesh Dutt helped Bengali literature to make the transition from the earlier classical tradition to modern style and thought and thus paved the way for the greatest genius of Bengali literature, Rabindranath, whose outstanding contribution raised Bengali to world rank in the twentieth century.

## CHAPTER V

### DISTRICT OFFICER

After holding temporary charge of two Districts, namely Bankura and Balasore, for two months each, Romesh Dutt was placed in 1883 in charge of one of the heaviest Districts in Bengal, Backergunj, on a long-term basis. The attention which this appointment attracted has already been noticed. Romesh Chunder took the appointment more as a challenge to prove the ability of Indians to hold such posts than to vindicate his own position. His term of office in this District lasted for two years, and earned for him the approbation of the Government. He was specially mentioned both in the Administration Report and in the Police Report of the year for the Province. Referring to the encomiums he had earned from the Government, he wrote characteristically to his brother :

"It gives me greatest pleasure that my successful administration has been thus publicly recognised, because this was the first instance that an Indian district has been administered by a native of India for about a year, and a failure of this experiment would have been disastrous for the prospects of our countrymen".

The successful administration of a heavy District by an Indian was something novel to the British rulers of the time who had convinced themselves that Indians could not discharge such responsibilities. The then Viceroy, the Marquess of Ripon, sent for Romesh Chunder, expressed his high appreciation of the work done by him and said: "I sent for you as I wished to see you and know you, be-

fore leaving India. Your work should be known in England; the fitness of Indians for high administrative posts would not then be questioned".

Romesh Dutt's administration of Backergunj had indeed been successful, and when after a tenure of two years the time came for him to hand over charge to his successor there were, in the words of the contemporary *Indian Mirror*, "demonstrations such as were seldom witnessed in Backergunj before... The relations between Mr. Dutt and other European residents in the station" *Indian Mirror* added, "official as well as non-official, were ever marked by an unbroken cordiality". He was equally popular with the Indian community who demonstrated their affection for him in no uncertain terms.

This popularity, however, Romesh Dutt earned not by subservience to any group of persons or to the ruling community, but by his demonstrable adherence to what he considered to be right and true. This brought him into conflict with influential groups, but he was confident that his objectivity would triumph in the long run. Writing to his brother in June 1884 from Backergunj he said : "One or two letters have appeared in the *Daily News* [the Calcutta paper of that name] speaking of my strong measures, also inspired by men whom I have checked; but my slumbers are perfect in spite of newspaper correspondence and affidavits! There is not a single point in my administration where they can really find fault with me".

It was while in charge of Backergunj that Romesh Dutt championed the cause of the peasants in the formulation of the Tenancy Bill of 1884. He was in favour of security of tenure and limitation of enhancement of rent by landlords, and was opposed to the right of pre-emption by the landlord in the event of sale of land by tenants. He made a number of valuable suggestions which were appre-

ciated by the Government who, however, did not feel strongly enough in the matter to push through the necessary changes in the face of opposition by interested landlords. The original Bill was considerably diluted as it went through the legislative processes before its enactment as the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885. A letter written to Romesh Dutt by the then Revenue Secretary to the Government of Bengal, who was largely in sympathy with his views, makes interesting reading. This letter was written when the Bill was in the final stages in the Council and before it became an Act :

".....it is now, I fear, quite hopeless to expect that it can be what we wanted in any of the points noticed by you. This is most disappointing to me, to people who like yourself think with me, because it seemed but a short time ago, that things were going fairly well.

"It will be impossible in the short space of a letter to explain the various reasons which have brought about this result; some of them are not even now clear to me; or others I cannot think with patience. The only hope, or perhaps I should say my great source of solace, is that in the long run the just cause must triumph. The landlords of Bengal are preparing for themselves the same sort of bed which a similar short-sighted policy made for landlords in my native country—Ireland. I can only trust that the pains of lying on the bed may not be so great for Bengal as it has been for Irish landlords.

"We at all events have done our best, and we can do nothing after the struggle is, for the time, over, but put up, as best as we can, against the obloquy we have incurred and the interested misrepresentations of our acts. The future lies with us; and in the future struggle, should it be precipitated by unwisdom on the landlords' part in our

time, I hope you and I may be fighting on the same side again."

On relinquishing charge of Backergunj in March 1885, Romesh Dutt proceeded on furlough for two years, the first part of which he spent in India, and the subsequent part in Europe. It was during this period that he translated the *Rig Veda* into Bengali, a monumental work by any standard. But even before the work was concluded he had to face violent opposition which has been well described by one of his biographers, Mr. Natesan :

"Orthodoxy took alarm at the prospect of the sacred hymns being laid open to laymen; and the idea of a non-Brahmin like Mr. Dutt laying sacrilegious hands on the holiest of holy books raised a perfect storm of opposition. Bengal had seldom witnessed such a violent literary controversy since the days when the venerable Vidyasagar had stood up for marriage of Hindu widows and the abelition of polygamy. Furious articles appeared week after week in vernacular newspapers, sarcasm or invective was poured on the devoted head of the daring translator, and the translation itself was condemned and vilified before it appeared in print! Mr. Dutt faced this opposition in the way in which he has faced all opposition through life. He scarcely deigned to make a reply; he worked silently and laboriously through the hot summer months; and before the year 1885 was out, his first volume astonished an orthodox world."

But discerning men were not wanting in Bengal who appreciated the monumental work done by Romesh Dutt. The scholarly Dwijendra Nath Tagore, eldest brother of the poet Rabindranath, said in a letter to Romesh Dutt :

"I am much beholden to you for the valuable present of your book. Under what a deep debt have you placed

Bengal! The mine of untold wealth which hitherto lay buried underground, you have now exposed to the dazzled gaze of Bengal. The ancient and priceless jewels are, it is true, ours by our birthright, but, nevertheless, it is through you that we see them again to-day."

The great literary figure of nineteenth century Bengal, Bankim Chunder Chatterjee, also wrote about the translation thus in the Bengali journal *Prachar* :

"Whatever others might say, we feel certain that this work of Romesh Babu will bring him enduring fame. When the Bible was translated into the modern languages of Europe, the Roman Catholic priests and other scholastics showed bitter hostility to the work. It is not unlikely that Romesh Babu will meet with similar opposition. But as in Europe the translation of the Bible paved the way for reforms in religion and a general advance in civilization, it is certain similar results will follow the translation of the *Rig Veda* in this country. The Bengalis will never be able to fully repay the debt of gratitude under which Mr. Dutt has placed them."\*

Romesh Dutt also received letters of appreciation and congratulations from famous Orientalists of the time like Prof. Max Muller and Prof. Cowell. The Anglo-Indian journal, *The Englishman*, appreciated the work and the Indian paper, *The Bengalee*, drew inspiration for Indian nationalism from the translation of the *Rig Veda*. Referring to the hymns in the *Rig Veda* which enjoin upon the priests and the worshippers perfect unity of heart, soul and spirit, *The Bengalee* wrote :

"Modern India, as it seeks to give effect to the lessons which it has learnt from the West, draws nearer to its own ancient traditions and habits of life. The translator

\* Quoted in the biography by J.N. Gupta, p. 119, Ch. IX



of the Vedas has rendered a public service by calling attention to the passage, and we join with him in the appeal which he makes that these *Stokas* should be graven on the heart of our people. We know now, such as we never knew before, that in cultivating among ourselves a sense of unity and brotherly feeling, we are cultivating the spirit of ancient India, that we are drawing nearer to our fathers, and that in our humble way, and according to the measure of our humble capacities, we are glorifying the spirit of our ancestors”.

Another work published about the same time in 1885 was the social novel in Bengali, *Sansar*. Hitherto, following the tradition popularised by Bankim Chunder Chatterjee, Romesh Dutt had written historical novels in his own language. *Sansar* was a departure from this tradition, for in this novel, and in the successor volume, *Samaj*, which was published eight years later, the author presented a picture of contemporary society in all its diversity, depicting the varied social forces in operation. The characters included the rich and profligate Zamindar, the young man imbued with Western ideas, the “Sadhu” learned in the best traditions of the Hindu faith, as well as the poor peasant and the ubiquitous money-lender.

*Sansar* was rendered into English as *The Lake of Palms* and received welcome attention from foreign journals. An Indian novel in English depicting Indian society was something new, for what the foreign reader had been used to was Anglo-Indian novels depicting the social side of European life in India. A picture of the real India had been denied to them, and they welcomed a novel which presented the picture ably and well.

The rest of his two years’ furlough Romesh Dutt spent in travels. He had already visited places of interest in Uttar Pradesh, and in the autumn of 1885 he toured

Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. He visited Amber and witnessed the "Dussehra" at Jaipur. He saw Chittor and recalled the proud history of the "*Rana of the Solar Race*" as he put it, and later went to Ujjain. "If Chittor is perhaps the most famed spot in modern Indian history," he wrote, "Ujjain or Ojein is one of the most famous in ancient Indian history..... It is difficult for a Hindu, even in these matter-of-fact days, to walk through the bazars, and stony streets, and dark lanes of the ancient city without recalling to mind the glory of Vikrama's Court, and the creations of Kalidasa's genius".

In April 1886, Romesh Dutt proceeded on a tour of Europe. This was his first visit, after his three years' stay in Europe between 1868 and 1871, as a student. His position in life had changed, and he reflected on the changed circumstances as the voyage to Europe commenced :

"Eighteen years ago I had performed the same voyage—what a large slice out of one's brief life! What a number of events have crowded themselves within these eighteen years of my life, what changes have transpired since I left my home impelled by an ambition which was rashness, and staked my future, staked all, on success in an almost impossible undertaking. I acted only as a young man can act, utterly uncertain as to my chances, as to my prospects, as to my future! But success like charity covers all sins, and success had crowned my undertaking.

"Now in 1886, I left Calcutta with greater assurance as to the present, with greater confidence as to the future. But cares and responsibilities of life had increased, not decreased with added years."

He spent a few months in England renewing old acquaintances, and, what is more, viewing conditions in that country with a maturer insight. As in his earlier student

days, however, his patriotic mind sighed for the day when similar conditions would prevail in his own country. Of special interest from this point of view are his reflections on a visit he made to the House of Commons in London. He recorded :

"Many of us who are young, and even many of us now in their middle age, will probably live to see the day when the people of India will have a constitutional means of expressing their views on the administration of their country, when their views will to a large extent shape that administration, and when their hands will to a great extent practically manage that administration".

He then proceeded to add :

"The divine right of conquerors will be as obsolete a phrase in the political dictionary of the twentieth century as the divine right of Kings is in the nineteenth, and the people of India will be proud of their connection with England, as are the sons of Englishmen in Australia or Canada".

His vision was, indeed, limited to what came to be called later as full Dominion Status, but this was itself well in advance of the political thinking in India in the nineteenth century. What is more significant, and even prophetic, however, is his observation about the "divine right of conquerors" which in that era of colonialism was an axiom accepted without question. To Romesh Dutt goes the credit of being one of the early political thinkers in India who dared question this right, thus laying the theoretical foundation for the national movement which followed in the twentieth century.

Before returning to India Romesh Dutt toured extensively in Europe during the remaining months of 1886. He visited Norway, Sweden, France, Belgium, Holland, Germany and Italy, paying special attention to places of his-

toric importance. He observed the political and economic conditions of these countries against the background of their history, and has left behind his reflections and his estimates. The tour enabled him not only to form a maturer impression of conditions in Europe than he was able to do during his earlier sojourn in the West as a student, but also to view the conditions in and the problems of India in a wider world perspective.

Romesh Chunder Dutt returned to India early in 1887 and resumed his official duties. His first posting on return was as District Magistrate, Pabna, a district where he had spent some of his boyhood days with his father. He spent a few months in this District, but was soon called upon to undertake a heavier assignment as District Magistrate, Mymensingh. In population and area this was the largest District in Bengal, and perhaps in the whole of India. The Government of the day was dissatisfied with the manner in which the District had been administered by the European Magistrate, and the then Lieutenant Governor decided to give a chance to Romesh Dutt. He took this as a challenge not merely for himself but on behalf of all Indians, and left nothing undone to prove that educated Indians were as capable as any other to discharge heavy responsibilities.

It was, however, while holding charge of this heavy District and in spite of all his pre-occupations that he found time to produce his best historical work, the *History of Civilisation in Ancient India*. In undertaking this work, his object was not so much to produce something original, or new, as to make available in a readily accessible and readable volume the story of our ancient civilisation so that the present generation and the future could have some

awareness of the glories of our past. As he himself put it modestly :

“In undertaking this great work, I must once for all disclaim any intention to make any new discoveries, or to extend in any way the limits of oriental scholarship and research. My limited knowledge of the subject precludes the possibility of such a pretension being advanced, and the limits of the present work made it impossible that any such results should be achieved. I have simply tried to string together, in a methodical order, the results of the labour of abler scholars, in order to produce a readable book for the general reader”.

His broad object for doing so can best be expressed again in his own words :

“No study has so patent an influence in forming a nation's mind, a nation's character, as a critical and careful study of its past history. And it is by such study alone that an unreasoning and superstitious worship of the past is replaced by a legitimate and manly admiration”.

The work earned warm appreciation from foreign Orientalists, the most prominent of whom, Prof. Max Muller, in acknowledging the book said : “I have read both the volumes with great pleasure; they exhibit the history of the Indian mind in a delightful panorama passing before our eyes”. Appreciative reviews appeared in foreign journals carrying tributes by such well-known Orientalists of the day as Dr. Kern of Leyden, Dr. Winternitz, Mon. Barth, Dr. Oldenburg and Dr. P. Schel. Learned treatises on ancient Indian culture had appeared before, mostly by European scholars, but this was the first time that the results of such research had been presented by an

Indian, firmly rooted in Indian culture and well-acquainted with the West, to the general readers both in India and in Europe. This view was well expressed by Prof. Jolly of Wurzburg who wrote :

"The investigations of European students of Indian antiquities are apt to be confined to minutiae, and the absorption in philological detail occasionally makes one lose sight of the grand aim of all studies of this kind, the elucidation of the gradual growth and development of such a superior and thoroughly original civilisation as your native country can boast of. Therefore, it is not only necessary for the wants of the general reader, but refreshing to the Oriental scholar as well, to have the result of philological research collected and arranged in a readable form. Nobody could be better qualified for performing this difficult task than scholars like yourself who are equally acquainted with all the intricacies of ancient Sanskrit literature, and with the wants and notions of the general reader in India and England."

In India too, the work was well appreciated, and the author received congratulatory messages from eminent Indians.

To continue the story of his official life, Romesh Dutt was transferred from Mymensingh in April 1890 after a stay in the District of about two years and a half. From then upto the autumn of 1892, when he proceeded on furlough for a year and two months, Romesh Chunder held charge successively of three Districts of Bengal—Burdwan, Dinajpur and finally Midnapore. His term of office in Midnapore was marked by the measures he took to protect the interests of the peasants against acts of oppression by a European firm which owned large Zamindaris in the District. This naturally brought him into conflict with European vested interests, but he was able to vindicate his



position with his Government who expressed appreciation of his administration of the District.

His furlough during 1892-93 Romesh Dutt spent as usual partly in literary work and partly in travels both in India and in Europe. The most important literary composition of this period was his *Lays of Ancient India*. In this volume he rendered into metrical English verse some of the best pieces of ancient Sanskrit literature. The rendering included passages from the Upanishads, from the Edicts of Asoka and a translation from the short epic, *Bhairavi*. As a reviewer put it : "Thus Romesh Dutt has presented to his readers at a glance a complete outline of the evolution of religion in the East; a story spread over five and twenty centuries, but told in outline in a hundred pages of short and impressive extracts from the literature of successive generations. In the remainder of his volume, he gives some specimens which may be comparison be called the modern poetry of India".

Travel occupied the rest of his furlough and he spent some time travelling in Kashmir, the Punjab and what is now Uttar Pradesh. He was thrilled by the historic places he visited and recalled their ancient glories. Arriving in the Punjab in the course of his tour, he wrote : "To the Punjab at last! This land of the five rivers, the land of the ancient Rishis, the land of the Rig Veda! One of those sacred lands where man reared his infant civilisation, and first cultivated arts, poetry and science".

Early in 1893 he proceeded once again to Europe. He spent some time in England and then visited Germany. In November 1893, he returned to India and to his official duties.

## CHAPTER VI

### LATER OFFICIAL LIFE AND RETIREMENT

With his return from leave in 1893 began the last phase of Romesh Dutt's official career. He was initially posted to Burdwan as District Officer, but in April 1894 a vacancy arose and Romesh Dutt was appointed to officiate as Commissioner of Burdwan Division. This was the first time that an Indian was appointed to this high post, and according to his biographer, J. N. Gupta, approval of India Office had to be obtained to the appointment. The appointment did not, however, pass unchallenged, and the Anglo-Indian journal, the *Englishman*, wrote sarcastically about European Civilians being "placed in subordination to the first Native Commissioner in India." The "experiment", as it was then regarded, nevertheless produced no unpleasant consequences, and the European civilians accepted the "subordination" without a murmur, though in fact one of them was senior to Romesh Dutt in service.

It was at this time, that is, in April 1894, that Bankim Chunder, the greatest literary figure of the time in Bengal, died. Romesh Dutt had been greatly attached to, and to a large extent influenced in his own literary work by him. He expressed his gratitude to Bankim Chunder and also his appreciation of his literary genius in memorial meetings and in articles contributed by him to literary journals. In an article contributed to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* Romesh Dutt wrote : "For the last thirty years, Bankim Chunder has been the inspiring genius of the Bengali nation, guiding the national imagination, and shaping their intellectual and religious aspirations." Bankim Chunder

had certainly inspired Romesh Dutt to his literary efforts in Bengali, and it was only the death of the former that broke the association that had begun from the lifetime of Romesh Dutt's father and which continued through the best literary period of the latter's life.

In April 1895, on the return from leave of his senior, Romesh Dutt was reverted as District Magistrate and Collector, Hooghly. In October of the same year, however, a fresh opportunity arose and he was appointed Divisional Commissioner once again and placed in charge of the Orissa Division. This was his last official posting. Early in 1897 Romesh Dutt proceeded on furlough, and in October 1897 he formally retired after putting in twenty-six years in the Indian Civil Service.

Romesh Dutt's tenure as Commissioner of two Divisions was marked by the same high standard of administrative efficiency as had distinguished his earlier official career. He was repeatedly mentioned with appreciation in Government Resolutions on the Administration Reports of the province, and the views he expressed on the various problems of the day were often quoted and given due weight. Many of the problems he dealt with naturally related to matters of current interest, though some of them had greater significance. What, however, is of interest in these views is not their validity or otherwise, judged specially on the background of subsequent developments and in the modern context, but the attitudes and the sympathies they displayed. His sympathy for the humblest peasants has already been noticed and he strongly opposed all through his career measures which sought to restrict their freedom. Writing on a proposed measure to restrict alienation of land by tenants, he said : "So far as Bengal is concerned, the proposed restrictions are uncalled for, and would be a confiscation of rights which the tenants of Ben-

gal are exercising every day. . . . . It is a pity that landlord interests prevailed in the Viceroy's Council, and the right of transfer was not legalised, but still left to custom."

He was equally emphatic on the need to protect the tenancy rights of the *raiyyats*, and he deplored that the existing law did not accord sufficient protection against unscrupulous exploiters. He constantly reverted to this subject in his official reports, and the then Government felt compelled to take note of it. In a Government Resolution in 1895, a reference was made to Romesh Dutt's views on this subject in the following terms :

"The statement in paragraph 80 that the Tenancy Act does not give protection to *raiyyats* in respect of their homestead lands and that *Zamindars* in attempting to oust *raiyyats* from their fields often secure their ends by turning them out of their homesteads, is a grave one. The section of the Tenancy Act which deals with the question of homesteads, Section 182, has hitherto been supposed to be an effective security for the rights of *raiyyats*, providing as it does, that unless a specific local custom or usage to the contrary is proved to exist, the homestead land is subject to the same conditions as the *raiyyats*' agricultural land. The Commissioner is requested to submit a special report on the subject, together with such statistics as he can collect to prove the existence of this abuse. If it does prevail, and if the law is powerless to stop it, an endeavour must be made to amend the law."

Still another subject close to Romesh Dutt's heart was the development of representative institutions, specially at the village and District levels. Throughout his official career he tried to influence Government in favour of a larger measure of local self-government. His arguments were two-fold. On the one hand, he wanted Indians, spe-

cially educated Indians, to acquaint themselves with the art of administration. This, in his opinion, was a prerequisite for political advancement, an essential first step for an ultimate democratic set-up in the country. On the other hand, he was firmly of the view that any administration to be meaningful must take into account the representative views of the persons sought to be administered. He pointed out that an administration by a small group of foreigners, however efficient from a narrow point of view, could not be conducive to the real welfare of the people unless it had a link with the people and was able to understand their attitudes, their hopes and their aspirations. On a number of occasions Romesh Dutt forcefully advocated to Government the introduction of liberal measures of local self-government, and though the response of the then Government was often halting and even negative, they were compelled to take note of these views and meet them as best they could. Apprehended loss of efficiency was the usual argument put forward on behalf of Government against any extension of local self-government. A typical statement of such a view is contained in a Government Resolution commenting on Romesh Dutt's report on the subject which is of some interest.

"The view expressed in paragraph 114", the Government Resolution stated, "that District Boards are useful as consultative bodies, and that it is a good thing for non-officials to obtain acquaintance with administrative work, is one which has never been contested. The battle of Local Self-Government—if there is a battle—lies round the question whether any loss of executive efficiency is incurred, and whether, if so, this loss is compensated by the advantages in which we all agree. On this subject, Mr. R. C. Dutt's remarks throw no light. But he is a hearty sup-

porter of village unions, and his views on their utility are sound and valuable."

The premature retirement of Romesh Dutt at the age of 49 when, in the normal course, he had nine more years to serve came as a surprise to some of his contemporaries, but was in fact entirely consistent with his outlook on life. He had entered the Indian Civil Service at a time when the higher Services under Government were all but closed to Indians. The governance of the country on which naturally depended the well-being of millions of his countrymen was entirely in the hands of the foreign ruling group. In the absence of even the rudiments of representative institutions entry into the higher Civil Services presented the only opportunity to an Indian to influence the government of his own country. Romesh Dutt was keen on availing himself of this opportunity; the more so because the view was held and widely propagated by the then rulers that Indians did not possess the requisite qualities to share in the responsibilities of higher administration. He was keen on disproving this view by his own example, and he took every difficult task entrusted to him not merely as a challenge to his own capacity to perform it adequately, but as a challenge to the capacity of educated Indians to be equal to the task. In accepting the challenge in this spirit Romesh Dutt rendered a real service to the country. He held higher posts in the Government than those held by his predecessors and contemporaries since the commencement of the British rule, and he held these posts with a success and distinction which could not be denied by the then Government. He may not have been able to break through their prejudices and convince the then rulers that Indians were capable of holding such posts with the same measure of success as British civilians. They could still argue, as some indeed did, that Romesh Dutt



was an exception and that one swallow did not make a summer. What, however, was more important than the views of the rulers was the confidence that he was able to infuse among his own countrymen. Lack of self-confidence is one of the characteristics of a subject nation, and the consequent demoralisation merely helps to perpetuate the status of subjection. An act or a service, therefore, which helps restore self-confidence among a subject people is a contribution towards the end of such subjection. It was this contribution that Romesh Dutt made by his distinguished career in the Indian Civil Service. He demonstrated to his countrymen that given the opportunity there was no reason why an Indian could not hold the highest administrative post as successfully as any member of the ruling community. Others followed his example, many of them with considerable success and distinction. It was thus that the myth of inherent superiority of the rulers gradually disappeared, and made way for more rational thinking on the relationship between the rulers and the ruled.

Nevertheless, an official career, however distinguished, was not the main objective in life that Romesh Dutt had set for himself. It was to him more a means than an end, a means to render service to his country. Literary achievement, as he had himself often pointed out, was his "first love". In his official life Romesh Dutt had reached the highest level that an Indian could possibly reach in his days. He was not badly treated by his Government, and it was not any such complaint that led to his retirement. As he himself put it in a letter to his brother, "They have treated me on the whole fairly, but not with any special favour. The doors of the Secretariat have been kept closed to me. I have not been employed for a day in any special post, and I have seen my juniors ap-

pointed as Secretary to Government, as Senior Secretary to the Board, as Inspector-General of Police, and in other special and highly paid appointments. I do not complain of this, but I only state these facts to show that if Government is not disposed to repose any real trust and confidence in me, I am free to utilise my powers and abilities, such as they are, to the benefit of my country in other ways."

In this last sentence seems to lie the true reason for his premature retirement. Government had treated him fairly, but no more than fairly. In fact, they had treated him fairly in a narrow sense only: they had given him no occasion to complain, but had no intention to take advantage of his obvious merit for the good of the administration. He realised, therefore, that the service that he could render to his country by continuing in the service of Government was limited. On the other hand, continuance in service with the limitations that it involved would restrict his freedom of expression and action. He had reached a stage when such freedom was necessary for service to the country. He had acquired considerable experience of administration and had had occasion to formulate his views broadly on administrative and economic problems of the country. He had, while in Government service, tried, occasionally with some success, to influence the policies of the Government. The time had come when his experience of administration and his mature views should be put to more direct use, untrammelled by restrictions of Government service. His free voice from outside Government would, on the one hand, better help formulate public opinion on right lines, and, on the other, have greater influence, as representing such opinion, on Government itself. It was clearly time for him, therefore, he felt, to retire from Government service and serve his country

for that ultimate political and economic goal that he had in mind. And in this view he proved himself to be right, for his career after retirement, though unfortunately restricted to about twelve years only, was productive of some of his best efforts which laid the foundation for the more massive struggle for independence which followed later.

## CHAPTER VII

### IN RETIREMENT

In January 1897, Romesh Dutt sailed once again for Europe. He had not fully decided on retirement from Service at that stage, but his mind was working in that direction. Much depended on what he could achieve, on what useful occupation he could take up. In one of his first letters that he wrote to his daughter from on board the ship he said : "My present leave is for ten months, and very likely I will extend it by a year. What I shall do after that I cannot guess. If I get some congenial occupation, if I do not feel stinted for money, I do not think I shall return to service. But return to India I must, may be on short visits, may be for long residence....."

His wander-lust, however, took him again to various parts of Europe before he settled down to work in England. He visited several cities in Italy—Naples, Rome, Florence, Pisa, Genoa and Turin—spent some time in France, and at last arrived in London early in April. Soon after his arrival he wrote again to another daughter of his : "Official life has no special charms for me if I can succeed in a more brilliant line, and it will not be for want of steady endeavour if I fail."

In England, Romesh Chunder immediately plunged into a variety of activities which interested him. He started cultivating the acquaintance of a number of eminent Englishmen interested in Indian affairs. He met Sir Stewart Bayley and Sir George Birdwood of the India Office, as also Sir W. Wedderburn and Sir William Hunter. About this time an event happened in India, the assassination of

a British Army officer, Lt. Ayert at Poona, which engaged his attention. This assassination as well as the attempted murder of another Englishman, Mr. Rand, which Romesh Dutt strongly and unhesitatingly condemned, created considerable resentment in England and gave rise to the demand for "effectual means to prevent the inculcation of sedition through the Press." Romesh Dutt tried to restore the correct perspective in the matter and argued through his letters to the Press that it was both unjust and unfair to hold the entire Indian community in suspicion. "It is panic only", he wrote, "which creates a general suspicion against Indian communities, panic by which Englishmen in India should never be influenced." Referring to the demand to prevent sedition in the Indian Press, he said, "If I were plotting against the Government of India, the first thing I would hope for, wish for, ask for, would be the gagging of the vernacular Press, and of all newspapers conducted by my countrymen. The suppression of such papers will be like the extinguishing of street lights to the burglar."

The year 1897 was spent mainly in recouping his health which had suffered from attacks of rheumatism and insomnia, and in planning and preparing for his future work. He was elected a member of the Authors' Club, and in December was offered lecturership in Indian History in the University College, London. The appointment carried no pay, but, as he himself stated in a letter to his daughter, it was a "high honour..... It gives me honourable and congenial occupation", he added, "and it also gives me a sort of status and position in this country".

A solid achievement during 1897 was, however, the 160-page book entitled *England and India* which Romesh Dutt published towards the end of the year. The book is significant because he referred in it to several features of

British rule in India which he developed in greater detail in his subsequent publications, and which formed the central theme of his politico-economic views in the closing years of his life. His central thesis in the book *England and India* was to show, by correlation of the history of India with that of England, that "English history and Indian history have run in parallel streams." "India has advanced with England," he stated in the concluding chapter of the book, "has occasionally blundered with England, but has in the long run moved onwards, however, slowly, in the path of progress chalked out by England."

In outlining the "progress", however, Romesh Dutt drew attention for the first time, by a scholarly analysis of facts and figures, to the economic consequences of British rule. In doing so, he was not guided by any political motive. His politics, whatever they were, were derived from his economics, and not *vice-versa*. He showed no impatience of the British connection; on the contrary, he wished this connection to continue. His condemnation of the economic aspect of the British rule was, therefore, not born out of his political desire for independence. His objective analysis of the economic consequences of British rule, however, led him to certain conclusions, and it is a tribute to his patriotism and his love of truth that he had the courage not only to accept them but also make them the main planks of his public life, though these conclusions were not entirely consistent with his over-all assessment of the British rule in India, and were in any case, well ahead of his times. We shall have occasion to revert to this aspect of the matter in a subsequent Chapter when considering Romesh Chunder's contribution as a builder of Modern India. It would suffice to say in the present context that the conclusions which he stated briefly in his book, *England and India*, and which he developed in



greater detail later, were all the more valuable because they were conclusions forced upon a seeker of truth, and not drawn up to support a pre-conceived political attitude, however laudable.

In his preface to *England and India*, Romesh Dutt stated his views in a nut-shell, as the following extracts would show :

"It is not gratifying to know that a country possessing a rich and fertile soil, and a frugal and industrious population, is still subject to recurring famines after a century and a half of British rule. It is not pleasant to learn that, after an uninterrupted peace of forty years, the people of India show no signs of increasing prosperity and greater security from distress. And it is sad to contemplate that, in spite of a civilised administration, of construction of railways and canals, of the vast extension of cultivation, and of the prosperity of foreign trade, India is still periodically desolated by calamities such as are unknown in Europe."

A little later, he analysed the reasons for this state of affairs as follows :

"And if an impartial inquiry be made into these matters, as it must sooner or later, it will be found that the present administration of India, honest and able as it undoubtedly is, has drifted into some serious blunders. And the worst of these blunders is its inordinate expenditure, which is impoverishing the people, and making them defenceless against droughts and famines. It will be found that continuous increase of the State demand from the produce of the soil, which is virtually the only means of subsistence for the mass of the people in India, is making them incapable of saving in good years, and resourceless in bad years. It will be found that the imperial policy of England in the East, to secure a 'scientific frontier' and to maintain an adequate army against Russia at the cost of India, is ex-

hausting that rich and fertile country. It will be found that a system of almost unlimited borrowing of English capital, and of increasing the public debt of India in times of peace, drains the resources of the country for the payment of the interest in gold. And it will be found that the non-representation of the views and opinions of the people in the administration of the country makes it weak and uninformed in essential matters, wanting in touch with the people, and ignorant of the real condition and even the real poverty of the voiceless millions."

What better analysis could there be in the brief space of a paragraph of the essential deficiencies of British rule in India! The merit of the analysis lies, however, not in its brilliance, but in the fact that it focussed attention objectively for the first time on the essential nature of the British connection. Subsequent chapters of the work dwelt on these themes further and demolished some of the common arguments advanced in support of the thesis of increasing prosperity of India under British administration. Referring to one such argument, namely "that the trade of India has increased by leaps and bounds, and the increase in trade must mean the prosperity of the people," Romesh Dutt stated in his work :

"Among the many blessings which England has conferred on India, the encouragement of Indian industries is not one. The increase in the value of imports into India really means that the manual industries of India have dried out in an unequal competition with the steam and machinery of England. And the increase in the value of exports from India means that vast quantities of food and raw material have to be sent out from India to pay for imported English goods..."

Another myth which was assiduously propagated at the time to prove the increasing prosperity of the Indian

people was about the import of gold which it is "fondly imagined", as Romesh Dutt put it, "is hoarded by the cultivators of India." "As a matter of fact," he added, "the annual import of gold represents the wear and tear in the gold jewellery and brocades, etc., which are almost the only luxury of the wealthier classes in India. The import of gold into India no more indicates the wealth of the Indian cultivator than the import of silk hats and kid gloves from Paris indicates the wealth of the British farm labourer."

Again, referring to trade and public works in general, Romesh Dutt stated:

"Trade and public works, carried on or conducted in a country with its own capital, are evidence of the material prosperity of the people. In the case of India they are profitable investments of English capital, and while they undoubtedly benefit India in a variety of ways, they have not secured the object of materially improving the condition of the agricultural and artisan classes of India."

In the administrative and political sphere too he deplored the complete lack of association with the people of the country. "No great and civilised country like India", he wrote, "is ruled in the present day under a form of Government in which the people are so utterly unrepresented." "A good government is a blessing to a country", he pointed out, "but a good government conducted, as far as possible, by the people themselves is a higher blessing, because it elevates the nation."

In spite of all his forthright criticism, Romesh Dutt remained essentially loyal to the British rule. The time for a revolt had not come yet. What he desired was not transfer of power, but reform of the British system of administration to bring it into greater conformity with the economic interests of India. He was convinced that the defi-

encies of British rule arose mainly out of lack of association of Indians with the administration, and, therefore, pleaded for increasing representation of Indians not only in the higher services of the country but in institutions associated with the administration at various levels, rural, urban and provincial.

The highly moderate attitude which Romesh Dutt displayed in his first work of this nature, *England and India*, met with a sympathetic, but not necessarily an approving response in the British Press. A typical comment was one that appeared in the *Scotsman* which, referring to Romesh Dutt's views, said: "To enforce this view loyally and temperately appears to be the main object of his book, and though it cannot be said that his arguments are conclusive or even always forcible, the style and temper in which they are put forward, as well as the nationality and position of the writer, claim for them serious and respectful consideration." The *Daily News*, on the other hand, while not denying the appalling poverty of the Indian people as described by Romesh Dutt, avoided the issue and indulged in self-congratulation by stating: "Mr. Dutt's own public life is an illustration of the spirit of English rule in India. The ideal of this rule is the finest, and the least selfish, ever conceived or attempted to be realised by a dominant race. In spite of mistakes, England has been true to it. She shows no sign of weariness, or of lessening faith in her mission."

## II

The year 1898 saw Romesh Dutt increasingly engrossed in the work of educating British public opinion in Indian affairs generally, and in propagating in particular the Indian

point of view in certain matters of topical interest. In regard to the former he had the advantage of having been appointed a lecturer in the University College, London. He delivered a series of lectures on the history, civilisation and religion of the ancient Hindus as shown in their ancient literature, and in his first lecture he complained of the little interest taken in ancient Indian history in the educational institutions of Europe, as compared with the interest taken in the history of Greece and Rome. He later delivered a series of lectures on the Muslim rule in India, and subsequently on the British rule, and portrayed clearly in these lectures the economic and cultural development of the country in the middle ages and in modern times.

But it was not merely to Indian history that Romesh Dutt drew attention. He spoke on the political and economic problems of India, on the 'forward' frontier policy which cost so much to the Indian revenues and on the appalling poverty of the Indian masses. During the year Romesh Dutt had spoken at about twenty four meetings held in different parts of England. Of great interest in this connection are the views that he expressed on Imperialism, views that anticipated the opinions widely held subsequently during the Freedom Movement. He wrote :

"It is an age of Imperialism we live in; all over Europe there is the unending struggle for material interest, for conquests, annexations, extension of markets, increase of profits. The noblest episodes of Mr. Gladstone's life, his advocacy of the cause of the Bulgarians in 1876, and his advocacy of the cause of Crete and the Armenians in 1897—are regarded at the present time as fantastic and Quixotic! We have changed all that. Rhodes, who founded Rhodesia somewhat after the method of Clive and Hastings, is the modern hero, and gets his certificate of honour from our present statesman, Chamberlain; Jameson is

publicly condemned for his raid, but is privately admired; Mr. Goschen is almost universally lauded for spending millions on millions in increasing the British navy; and the rampant Tory papers are trying to hound on Lord Salisbury to war with Russia and other powers in order to secure monopoly of trade and influence in China. Never since the Crimean War, never perhaps since the death of Castlereagh in 1822, has Imperialism been so rampant in England; never have the purely animal instincts of self-love and self-aggrandisement been stronger or more violent; never have the higher instincts of humanity and justice, of respect towards rival nations, and fairness towards subject nations, been at a lower ebb. Do you now understand why the Indian Government has, in recent years, turned to methods of coercion and repressive legislation? Talk to the serried ranks of Tory members in the House, and to high Indian officials, about reposing trust and confidence in the people of India, about extending their privileges, and allowing them a larger share in the administration of their own concerns; you may as well speak Chinese to them! Their words and ideas find no place in the vocabulary of their politics, they convey no intelligible sense or meaning to them..."

It was at this time, from August 1898, that Romesh Dutt took up an intensive campaign against the Bill introduced in the Bengal Legislative Council to modify the Constitution of the Calcutta Corporation. He addressed letters to the Press, delivered speeches and interviewed Ministers and Members of Parliament. He maintained regular contact in this connection with Raja Binay Krishna who was leading the agitation in Calcutta against the Bill, and reported to him regularly on his activities in England.

Romesh Dutt was firmly convinced that reduction of



the representative element which the Bill sought was a retrograde step. He appealed to the higher instincts of the British public, and in a letter to the *Manchester Guardian* on the 9th December, 1898, stated as follows :

"In Bombay the delegates are empowered to choose two-thirds of the members of the Executive Committee; in Calcutta it is proposed by the present Bill that the delegates should choose only one-third of the members of the Executive Committee. This virtually means that the governing executive body would not represent the delegates, and would not therefore represent the wishes and opinions of the ratepayers. Is this an object which should be aimed at, even in India? Generations of English statesmen and administrators have laboured in England and in India to evoke that 'high public spirit' which Sir John Woodburn commends so much, but which it is now intended to crush and stamp out with a light heart and a despotic hand. Macaulay and Bentinck, Munro and Elphinstone, Canning and Northbrook, Ripon and Gladstone, all have laboured to spread English education, to create public spirit and to bring self-governing institutions into existence in India. And when a small and humble and successful beginning has been made, will Englishmen look at the fruit of their labours with distrust and suspicion, and will Lord George Hamilton root out the tree which has taken three generations to grow?

"The death of self-government will be the death of good administration in India. You cannot govern India well except with the cooperation of the people; and you cannot secure their cooperation without trusting them with some powers."

The campaign, however, failed and the Bill was passed. In September 1899, twenty elected Commissioners of the Calcutta Corporation, including all the prominent and

most experienced men, resigned in protest. The controversy thus ended; but the efforts which Romesh Dutt and his colleagues had put in had not been fruitless. Well could they say to themselves :

“Freedom’s battle once begun  
Bequeathed from bleeding Sire to Son,  
Tho’ vanquished oft, is at last won.”

### III

In the midst of these preoccupations Romesh Chunder found time to undertake the monumental work of translating the great Epics of India into English verse. In August 1898 his translation of the *Mahabharata* appeared, and exactly one year later that of the *Ramayana*. The work was stupendous in nature and nothing like it had been attempted before. Referring to the *Mahabharata*, he said in his Epilogue that the original work “went on growing for a thousand years after it was first compiled and put together in the form of an Epic; until the crystal rill of the Epic was all but lost in an unending morass of religious and didactic episodes, legends, tales and traditions.” The result was a poem of ninety thousand couplets, about seven times the size of *Iliad* and *Odyssey* put together. The plan which Romesh Chunder chose was to select from the vast mass of materials the couplets which narrated the main incidents of the Epic. To describe it in his own language, “The more carefully I examined the arrangement, the more clearly it appeared to me that these main incidents of the Epic would bear a full and unabridged translation into English verse; and that these translations, linked together by short connecting notes, would virtually present the entire story of the Epic to the modern reader in a form and within limits which might

be acceptable..... The advantage of this arrangement is that, in the passages presented to the reader, it is the poet who speaks to him, not the translator."

In translating the *Ramayana*, he followed a similar plan, but the task was perhaps a little easier, for in the *Ramayana*, as he put it, "the main story is more distinctly the creation of one mind." The distinction in the conception of the *Mahabharata* and that of the *Ramayana*, as Romesh Dutta put it, is that the former "grew out of the legends and traditions of a great historical war between the Kurus and the Panchalas" while the *Ramayana* "grew out of the recollections of the golden age of the Kosalas and the Videhas." The *Ramayana* is, therefore, more a work of imagination than the *Mahabharata*. "The characters of the *Mahabharata* are characters of flesh and blood, with the virtues and crimes of great actors in the historic world; the characters of the *Ramayana* are more often the ideals of manly devotion to truth and of womanly faithfulness and love in domestic life."

The translations were well received both in England and in India. The translation of the *Mahabharata* carried an Introduction by Prof. Max Muller in which he said: "We are all the more grateful to Mr. Romesh Dutt for having given us a kind of photographic representation, a snapshot as it were, of the old poem—the longest poem, I believe, in the whole world—and having enabled the students of literature to form for themselves some kind of idea of what our Aryan brothers in India admired and still admire in the epic poetry of their country."

The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society in its issue of July 1899 carried these comments: "It should be judged as a literary effort, not as historical criticism. And as literary effort, it is certainly a very great success. A generous admiration for the original, and a warm sym-

pathy with its tone, a striking command of vigorous and flowing and idiomatic English, a fine sense of rhythm, and a real power of poetic imagination have combined to render this selection just what it is intended to be—a most interesting and attractive way of introducing to English readers what the author considers to be the essence of the grand old Indian poem.”

## CHAPTER VIII

### ENTRY INTO ACTIVE POLITICS

The year 1899 marked the entry of Romesh Chunder into active politics, for it was in December of that year that he presided over the annual session of the Indian National Congress at Lucknow. The invitation that he received from Mr. W. C. Bonnerjee to be the President of the Congress had not been anticipated by him. He received the invitation, as he stated in his Presidential address, "with some degree of surprise and some degree of misgiving." The surprise is accounted for by the fact that he had no previous warning of the offer, and the misgiving arose out of his not having taken a decision until then to join a political organisation to propagate his political views and pursue his political objectives. Literary fame, as he had stated more than once, had been his first love from his early days. Official career, which he had accepted as a challenge to prove the fitness of educated Indians for the responsibilities of higher administration, had never held any charm for him for its own sake. His service experience had, however, brought him into contact with the agricultural masses of the country, and had given him an insight into the causes of their poverty and economic distress. His sensitive nature could not help being grieved by the fact that more than a century of British rule had left the people of India on the verge of subsistence at the best of times and completely defenceless against famines and distress which continued to occur with ruthless regularity. He was eager to do something which could help alleviate the lot of the Indian peasants. His further con-

tinuance in service could be of no help in this direction. He must have freedom of expression and of action to propagate his views, and this he could have only if he retired.

It was natural, therefore, that on retirement Romesh Chunder should seek to enter politics and thereby influence the policies of Government. His politics was, however, of the constitutional type. He continued to believe firmly that fate or history which had ordained the British connection with India was basically for the good of the country. He believed further that the framework of administration which the British had set up in India was fundamentally sound, and their intentions were good. The British connection, according to him, had linked India's progress with that of Britain, and had subjected India to reactionary policies whenever reaction was on the ascendant in Britain. The British "mistakes", as he would have liked to call them, therefore, arose either out of the reactionary trends in Britain itself, or because of lack of knowledge on the part of the British rulers of the real conditions in India. In either case, he was of opinion that the British public opinion should be sought to be better informed not only about the facts of Indian life but also of the hopes and aspirations of the Indian people. He deplored in this connection the meagre participation of Indians in the administration of their own country, and he deplored even more the almost complete lack of representative institutions in India. It was only by the development of representative institutions and with greater participation of the Indians in the administration of the country that the Indian point of view could be brought to the notice of the rulers and the "mistakes" of the past avoided.

The urge to enter politics on retirement from service



was thus a logical sequence to Romesh Chunder of the work that he had done in administration earlier in his life; and yet the decision to do so was sharply criticised at the time by the apologists of the then Government as an act of ingratitude on the part of a person who had been nourished and raised to the stature that he had reached by the Government. No criticism could be based on a narrower view than this. There was no contradiction between Romesh Chunder's work in the administration and the work that he undertook in politics. He did not seek to subvert the administration that he had served. He merely sought to improve it for the good of the people administered. This good, he was firmly convinced, could not be achieved unless the Indian people were themselves involved in a larger measure than was the practice hitherto in the task of administration. In his opinion, far from subverting the administration, the measures he suggested could only have the effect of preserving it. He owed it to the administration which he had served for the better part of his adult life, he felt, to point out to them the mistakes they had committed in the past and to caution them against perpetuating them in future.

It is one of the characteristics of autocratic administration, specially of foreign autocracy, that it is thoroughly intolerant of criticism. In fact, it is such intolerance that hastens the end of autocracy. Criticism, however constructive and well-intentioned, is regarded as tantamount to disloyalty and is discouraged, if not suppressed altogether. This creates frustration among the critics, and widens the gulf that separates the autocratic administration from the people administered. In course of time, sooner rather than later, the gulf becomes too wide to be bridged, and frustration ripens into anger. The history of British autocracy in India is no exception to this general pattern. The construc-

tive criticism of Romesh Dutt was regarded in conservative Government circles as disloyalty, unworthy of a former civil servant who had sworn loyalty to the administration. His suggestions fell on deaf ears, though looking at them in retrospect one can only marvel at their moderation. The result was that the administration persisted in its economic and political policies which progressively deepened the alienation of the people. It is no wonder, therefore, that within less than a generation of Romesh Dutt's death his moderation had lost its appeal.

Romesh Dutt's entry into active politics, and specially his acceptance of the office of President of the Indian National Congress in 1899 needs no explanation in the modern context. He had served the British administration in order to serve his country better. The stage had, however, arrived when he felt that he could be of greater service to the country outside the administration than from within. At that stage, he resigned from the service. As a patriotic Indian his loyalty was fundamentally to his country. His adherence to the administration was, as it must necessarily be to all patriots, only a means to serve the country. Even when he resigned from the service he saw no basic conflict between the interests of administration and those of his country, but he felt that he could influence the policies of the administration better and orient them more effectively for the greater interests of his country from outside. There was no act of ingratitude, no disloyalty to the basic causes he had served, in his resignation. Those who accused him of such ingratitude and disloyalty gave away their own case, for they could justify such accusation only on the assumption that there was a conflict between the then administration and the interests of the country. It is only on the assumption of such a conflict that Romesh Dutt could be accused of being ungrateful to

the administration by choosing to serve his country otherwise. Romesh Dutt saw no such conflict, but if there was one he could as a patriotic Indian hardly be accused of preferring his country's interests to those of an autocratic, alien administration.

In December 1899, Romesh Dutt presided over the annual session of the Indian National Congress at Lucknow. In his Presidential address, he defined the functions of the Congress as follows :

“There are two sides to every question, and it is absolutely necessary for the purpose of good government and of just administration that not only the official view, but the people's view on every question should be represented and heard. There are local bodies in different parts of India which give expression to the people's views on local questions; but this National Congress is the only body in India which seeks to represent the views and aspirations of the people of India as a whole in all large and important and, if I may use the word, Imperial questions of administration. Therefore, the National Congress is doing a service to the Government the value of which cannot be over-estimated, and which I feel certain, is appreciated by the Government itself.”\*

He referred in his address to the Sedition laws passed by the Government the previous year and condemned them as a blunder. He deplored the Calcutta Municipal Act also passed recently which withdrew the representation facilities earlier conceded. But the subject nearest to

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\*For full text of Presidential address, please see Appendix III.

his heart was the economic condition of the people and the recurring famines which visited the country.\* The famine of 1897 had devastated parts of the country, and a fresh famine was staring the country in the face, as he put it, in 1899. He was worried by the frequency of the famines and completely unconvinced by the official reasons put forward for these visitations. It was not the growth of population or the improvidence of the people, he pointed out, that caused the famines; "The real cause of his [the average Indian's] wretchedness and indebtedness", he stated in his address, "is that except in Bengal and a few other tracts, the land assessment is so heavy that the cultivator is not able to save in good years enough to meet the failure of harvests in bad years. All our village industries, like spinning and weaving, have been killed by a free competition with the steam and machinery of England. Our cultivators and even our village industrial classes therefore virtually depend on the soil as the one remaining source of their subsistence."

Later in his address he referred briefly to the "various other causes of the poverty of India under the British Rule". To sum up these causes he stated :

"There is the question of the enormous Military Expenditure, and the maintenance of a vast army out of the resources of India, not for the requirements of India, but for the requirements of the British Empire in Asia, Africa and even in Europe. There is the question of the National Debt which, in Great Britain, has been reduced by about 175 millions since 1860, and which has gone up by over 100 millions in India within this period, causing an increasing drain

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\* For a list of famines please see appendix V. Famine deaths are given in appendix VI.

out of the revenues of India for the payment of interest in England. There is the question of the currency which has been lately settled by the Currency Committee in a manner not conducive to the interests of the millions of cultivators whose debts have been increased, and savings depreciated. There is the question of encouraging and helping the Industrial Classes ruined by unfair competition, a question which has been ably and exhaustively dealt with by one of the most learned and thoughtful writers of our generation, the Hon'ble Mr. Justice Ranade of Bombay. And there is the question of the possible saving in expenditure by the larger employment of the educated people of India, not only in the Indian Civil Service, but in the higher grades of all services, Educational and Medical, Police and Engineering, Post Office and Telegraph."

In his address Romesh Dutt dwelt in some detail on the land assessment in the various Provinces and pleaded for reasonable assessment and for stability on the ground that "the cultivator should be assured an adequate share of the produce of his land if he is to be saved from indebtedness and poverty, distress and famine." On the broader question of administration he pleaded for increased association of Indians in the administration of the country by making the Village Unions, the District Boards, the Municipalities and the Provincial Legislative Councils not only more broad-based but also more effective. And for the Viceroy's Executive Council he put forward the very moderate suggestion that it should have on it "a few Indian gentlemen who represent the views, the opinions and the feelings of the people". "An Executive Council", he conceded, "cannot be much enlarged without loss of

efficiency but surely the Viceroy's Council could make room for three Indian gentlemen, one to represent Bengal and Assam, another to represent the North-West and the Punjab, and the third to represent Bombay, Madras and the Central Provinces". The moderation of the proposal needs hardly to be pointed out. One wonders how an autocratic administration creates graver problems for itself by being impervious even to such moderate counsels for reform.

Romesh Dutt's faith in representative institutions, though expressed with great moderation and caution, was deep and unflinching. "The experiment of administration for the people, not by the people, was tried in every country in Europe in the last century, by some of the best intentioned sovereigns that ever lived, who are known in history as the Benevolent Despots of the 18th Century. The experiment failed because it is an immutable law of nature that you cannot permanently secure the welfare of the people if you tie up the hands of the people themselves. Every country in Europe recognises this truth now, and England foremost of all. Every English colony has obtained a system of self-government and from being discontented and disaffected they are now the strongest supporters of the British Empire."

In concluding his address, Romesh Chunder struck an optimistic note, a note of faith :

"Gentlemen, it is possible," he said, "to avert distress and deaths from famines, to spread prosperity and contentment and peace, and to evoke the zealous and loyal and spontaneous support of a grateful nation, only by conceding to the people, with due and proper safeguards, the rights of self-Government. It is not possible, without such concession, without admitting the



people to a real share in the control of their own affairs, to save India from distress and discontent, from impoverishment and famines. Therefore, as an old and faithful servant of the Indian Government, I have thought it my duty to raise my voice and urge the adoption of the better and the wiser course, 'the only course which can save our country from preventable misfortunes and disasters, and can consolidate the British Rule in India.'

The soundness of the views expressed by Romesh Dutt, their moderation and the fact that they came from a person of his eminence who had spent the best part of his life in the service of the Government compelled even the normal critics of the National Congress to pay respectful attention to his address. The Anglo-Indian press of the day, among whom the *Englishman* of Calcutta occupied an important position at the time, remarked :

"The public always expect something good from Mr. Romesh Dutt, and in his address at Lucknow, as President of the Congress, it has not been disappointed. . . . . In these days of famine, the observations of so experienced an administrator as Mr. Dutt on the chronic poverty and indebtedness of a large proportion of the rural population in India call for more than a passing notice."

In similar strain the *Times of India* wrote on the 1st January, 1900 :

"We have nothing but praise for the general tone of Mr. Romesh Chunder Dutt's admirable presidential address at the Lucknow meeting of the Indian National Congress. It was restrained in

language, moderate in the aspirations it expressed, and evidently animated by a sincere desire to offer friendly and helpful criticism upon the policy of the British administration in India."

The Presidentship of the Indian National Congress marks the high water-mark of Romesh Dutt's public life. As in several other spheres he had achieved a pioneering role. There had been Congress Presidents of eminence before him, but the Congress had hitherto received no official support or sympathy. As the *Statesman* pointed out, the time was not so very distant "when the Congress was denounced by nine officials out of ten as a centre of disloyalty." The fact that Romesh Dutt who had hitherto distinguished himself as an administrator and a man of letters had presided over the annual session of the Congress, had defended the role of the Congress and had voiced the aspirations of his people, compelled the critics of the Congress to reconsider their attitude. The Congress could no longer be dismissed as a forum for disloyal agitators. The views and aspirations expressed by the Congress could no longer be regarded as the utterances of irresponsible extremists. They were genuine enough and were sufficiently deep-rooted in the minds of the people to have received the support of a scholar and administrator who was basically loyal to the administration.

Indian opinion naturally hailed Romesh Dutt for the powerful support he had given to the popular cause. An address was presented to him in Calcutta by Mr. W. C. Bounerjee on behalf of the citizens, and a demonstration was held in his honour. Speaking at this demonstration Mr. Surendra Nath Banerjee, the veteran of the early national movement, spoke with his usual eloquence:

"Mr. Dutt has been in the service of Government, but the service which he has now entered upon

is higher and nobler than even the most distinguished service to which he belonged—it is the service of his country and of his countrymen. Mr. Dutt has been honoured by the Government. But what higher honour could there be than the approbation and the gratitude of one's own community? What are titles and decorations—what are powers and principalities—what is even the splendour of a great name, compared to the love, the gratitude and the admiration of those in whose midst one's lot is cast? These, the choicest of the earthly blessings, enjoyed by the favoured of the gods, are yours, Sir. May you long live to enjoy them !”

## CHAPTER IX

### TWO FAMOUS BOOKS

On the 15th March 1900, Romesh Dutt sailed once again for Europe. Addressing a farewell meeting at Bombay, presided over by Sir Pherozeshah Mehta, on the eve of his voyage to Europe, he said : "This time tomorrow I shall be on the sea on my way to Europe, but wherever I may be your aims and aspirations shall be mine, your endeavours shall be my endeavours, and we shall work in a common purpose and a common object, for the happiness and prosperity and good government of the common motherland."

On the 1st April he reached London and threw himself immediately into a whirlpool of activity. His Presidential Address at the annual session of the Indian National Congress had created a great deal of interest in the ruling circles in England, and on the 3rd April, soon after Romesh Dutt reached London, there was a debate in the House of Commons on a motion by Sir William Wedderburn that "a searching enquiry should be instituted in order to ascertain the causes which impair the cultivators' power to resist the attacks of famine and plague, and to suggest the best preventive measures against future famines". The then Secretary of State for India, Lord George Hamilton, defended the Government by questioning the correctness of the factual data on which Romesh Dutta had relied, but conceded that when a person of the eminence of Mr. Dutt "had made definite statements of fact in order to show that land assessments in certain parts of India were too high, he at once paid the most careful attention and gave

the most careful investigation to these facts and statements." In his anxiety, however, to prove that the Indian landlords like those in Bengal who had permanent settlements with Government were in fact more extortionate in their demands towards the peasants than the Government were in their dealings with the "rai-yats", he questioned Mr. Dutt's assertion that the rents were low in Bengal and never exceeded one-sixth of the gross produce, or about 16 per cent. According to the Secretary of State, the "rents in Bengal in most cases were over 51 per cent, and even went upto 70 and 75 per cent."

Romesh Dutt replied to the charge of factual inaccuracy of his data in a letter addressed to the *Times*, and another addressed to the *Manchester Guardian*, and supported his facts not only on the basis of his personal observations during his long service as a Revenue Officer in Bengal, but also on the authority of Sir William Hunter who had collected the relevant information in his *Statistical Account of Bengal*. The *Manchester Guardian* in commenting on this controversy remarked :

"This testimony of an Indian official, and an eye-witness confirmed by an acknowledged British authority on India, cannot be reconciled with the unhesitating declaration of Lord George Hamilton, that in no case are rents in Bengal as low as one-sixth of the total produce. It is impossible to resist the conclusion that Mr. Dutt is right when he asserts that the Secretary of State is misinformed and it is to be hoped that Lord George Hamilton will accept the challenge thrown down by Mr. Dutt to institute an enquiry through the district officer of Bengal."

Romesh Dutt was naturally gratified that his Congress speech had at least raised a controversy in England and caused some re-thinking. In a letter to his brother he wrote : "The whole official world in England and India

is overwhelmed by my charge against the Indian Government about over-assessments of lands. I hear that the India Office here is quite upset, and is looking up figures and documents. I will give them no rest, but will prove the charge to the hilt."

## II

In July 1900 Romesh Dutt published his book entitled *Famines in India*. The book began with a brief history of famines in India from 1770 to the end of the nineteenth century and contained five "open letters" to Lord Curzon dealing with land assessments in the Central Provinces, Madras, Bombay, Bengal and Northern India. In the Preface to this publication he summed up the suggestions he had made as follows :

"The suggestions I have made in the following pages are, I believe, moderate and practicable, and do not contemplate any change in the different land systems which prevail in the different provinces of India. For the sake of convenience I will sum them up below :

"(a) Where the State receives land revenue through landlords and the revenue is not permanently settled, we ask that the "Saharanpur Rules" limiting State demand to one-half the rental may be universally applied.

"(b) Where the State receives land revenue direct from cultivators, we ask that the rate may not exceed one-fifth the gross produce of the soil in any case, and that the average of a district, including dry lands and wet lands, be limited to one-tenth of the gross produce, which is approximately the revenue in Northern India.

"(c) Where the State receives land revenue direct from cultivators, we ask that the rule laid down by Lord Ripon, of permitting no enhancements at recurring settle-



ments, except on the ground of an increase in prices, be universally applied.

“(d) Where the land revenue is not permanently settled, we ask that the settlements be made not oftener than once in thirty years, which is the general rule in Northern India and Bombay.

“(e) We urge that no cesses, in addition to the land revenue, be imposed on the land except for purposes directly benefiting the land; and that the total of such cesses may not exceed six and a quarter per cent (one anna in the rupee), in any province of India.

“(f) We urge that now that the protective railway lines have been completed, a million tens of rupees be annually spent out of the Famine Insurance Grant on protective irrigation works; that these works be undertaken, as recommended by the Famine Commission of 1898, “without expectation of direct return” from the outlay; and that the cultivators be left the option of using the water when he requires it, and paying for it when he uses it.

“(g) And lastly, we urge that in the case of any difference between cultivators and Settlement Officers in the matter of assessment, an appeal be allowed to an independent tribunal not concerned with the fixing and levying of the land tax.”

These were no Utopian proposals. They were moderate in the extreme, and yet they were designed to reduce the burden on the cultivators and to build up their resistance to famines. As he stated in the book: “If we honestly seek for the true causes of the recent famines in India, without prejudice or bias, we shall not seek in vain. The immediate cause of the famines in almost every instance is the failure of rains, and this cause will continue to operate until we have a more extensive system of irrigation than has yet been provided. But the in-

tensity and the frequency of recent famines are greatly due to the resourceless condition and the chronic poverty of the cultivators, caused by the over-assessment of the soil on which they depend for their living."

It was this deep conviction that the basic cause of the recurring famines lay in the poverty of the cultivators, and that this poverty was aggravated by the extortionate rents realised by the Government that led Romesh Dutt to plead repeatedly for moderation of land assessment. He saw no way out of the twin tragedies of poverty and famine unless the cultivator was left with sufficient resources in a good year to meet the demands of a year when the harvest failed. And yet, it was to this very logical and moderate demand that the then Government consistently turned the blind eye. To make matters worse, the ruling circles not only denied that the rates of assessment were extortionate, but advanced unreal, sophisticated arguments to suggest that they were no burden at all. But Romesh Dutt was too passionately attached to the lot of the millions of cultivators to be taken in by such arguments. They irritated him and provoked his ire. He could not suppress his annoyance and his feelings of disgust when such arguments were advanced in support of an indefensible system in callous disregard of the human sufferings involved. One such argument was based on the distinction between rent and tax. Rent, according to classical economists, is the surplus from land which should be distinguished from land tax which is essentially a levy on the products of the land. It was argued that land revenue was in the nature of rent, and was not a tax at all. Romesh Dutt strongly differed from this view and held that it was a tax on land. In the concluding chapter of his book, *Famines in India*, he referred to this view as one of the fallacies concerning land tax in India, and said :

"So far as the poor agriculturists of India are concerned, the dispute is merely a quibble, and often a heartless quibble. Four-fifths of the population of India depend directly or indirectly on the produce of the soil, and if an unduly large share of the produce is taken by the State, so as to leave the cultivators impoverished, it is small comfort to them to learn that some able and ingenious financiers call it a rent and not a tax. The ten thousand cultivators of Madras, who are annually driven from their homes and lands for being unable to pay the State demand, will derive little satisfaction from the thought that very distinguished and very honourable gentlemen give that demand one name rather than another. The millions of cultivators who are driven to the money-lender within two months after they have reaped their harvest, in order to meet the State demand, will derive little consolation if the curious information be placed before them that learned political economists in Europe give a very special name to that very severe demand. And the six millions of starving men and women and children, who have been unable to save anything after paying the State demand in past years, and who are crowding to relief centres in this year of drought and failure of crops, will fail to appreciate the kindness of able and eloquent debaters who are ready to prove that the demand was no tax at all."

### III

*Famines in India* received on the whole favourable comments from the Press and from public men in England. The *Times* for instance, without agreeing with the point of view expressed by Romesh Dutt, said :

"The subject is one upon which it is difficult to dogmatise.....It is, however, most desirable that the

main features should be succinctly stated within a reasonable compass, and without technical details. Should Mr. Dutt succeed in eliciting from the Indian Government a brief and popular answer, he will have done much service to a cause which he and all friends of India must have at heart, even though some of his positions may be shaken."

*Famines in India*, however, was not the only product of his labour during this period. He was in fact working on a more ambitious project, namely, to write an *Economic History of India* from the early British days down to the end of the Victorian era. In the meantime, he was constantly engaged, often in active cooperation with Dadabhai Naoroji and W. C. Bonnerjea, in educating the British public on Indian problems. He succeeded in forming in London an Indian Famine Union with the object of enquiring into the causes of Indian famines and adopting measures for their prevention. It was at the instance of this body that a Memorial was presented to the Secretary of State for India in January 1902 to institute enquiries into the economic conditions in India. The signatories to this Memorial included such distinguished British public figures as the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishop of Liverpool and the Dean of Manchester.

The publication of the first volume of the *Economic History of India* (1757-1857) early in 1902 marked the end of this phase of Romesh Dutt's life. Taken along with the second volume which appeared in 1904 and which carried the story to the beginning of the twentieth century, the *Economic History* was a monumental work, fully documented by official records, which presented a detailed and authoritative history of a century and a half of British rule in India. As Dr. D. R. Gadgil has pointed out in his Introduction to an Indian edition of the *Economic History* published recently, Romesh Dutt was not the sole exponent of

the views expressed in this work. He was perhaps not even the pioneer, which role, according to Dr. Gadgil, belongs to Dadabhai. Nevertheless, as Dr. Gadgil has stated, Romesh Dutt's "was almost the first history of a colonial regime written from the point of view of the subject of a colonial empire. It contains, in essence, a preview of what came later to be called the economics of colonialism."

The succeeding generation of freedom fighters who drew liberally on the facts and views presented in the *Economic History* owed a deep debt of gratitude to Romesh Dutt. He had presented in two volumes, on the basis largely of official documents, a picture of the economic effects of a colonial regime. This picture was of wider interest, well beyond the Indian scene, but to the Indians it gave for the first time a consciousness of their own position, and it created among them a yearning for a better living. To the student of the economics of colonialism it had a wider significance. India was a unique example of colonial rule in the world, for it was here that a colonial power on the ascendant had come into contact with a proud and ancient civilisation temporarily on the decline. The result of this contact showed more glaringly than in other colonial countries how this decline, in the economic sphere at any rate, was accelerated by the colonial regime until the reaction set in, which enabled the temporarily subjugated country to regain its soul. This latter phase belongs to the twentieth century, well after Romesh Dutt had passed away, but it fell to him to chronicle the declining phase, both for the enlightenment of the students of history in general and for setting in motion in his own country the process of rejuvenation of a culture which had lost itself in a morass of confusion and despondency.

In his Preface to the first volume of the *Economic His-*

tory, Romesh Dutt summed up the economic effects of colonialism in India as follows :

"Place any other country under the same condition with crippled industries, with agriculture subject to a heavy and uncertain Land Tax, and with financial arrangements requiring one-half of its revenues to be annually remitted out of the country, and the most prosperous nation on earth will soon know the horrors of famine. A nation prospers if the sources of its wealth are widened, and if the proceeds of taxation are spent among the people, and for the people. A nation is impoverished if the sources of its wealth are narrowed, and the proceeds of taxation are largely remitted out of the country. These are plain, self-evident economic laws which operate in India as in every other country, and the Indian statesman and administrator must feel that the poverty of India cannot be removed until Indian industries are revived, until a fixed and intelligible limit is placed on the Indian Land Tax, and until the Indian revenues are more largely spent in India."

It is of equal interest to quote another extract from the Preface where Romesh Dutt sets out the essential difference between a colonial regime and an Indian administration, however unwise the latter might be :

"Taxation raised by a King, says the Indian poet, is like the moisture of the earth sucked up by the sun, to be returned to the earth as fertilising rain; but the moisture raised from the Indian soil now descends as fertilising rain largely on other lands, not on India. Every nation reasonably expects that the proceeds of taxes raised in the country should be mainly spent in the country. Under the worst governments that India had in former times, this was the case. The vast sums which Afghan and Moghul Emperors spent on their armies went to support great and princely houses, as well as hundreds and thousands of soldiers and their fami-



lies. The gorgeous palaces and monuments they built, as well as the luxuries and displays in which they indulged, fed and encouraged the manufacturers and artisans of India. Nobles and Commanders of the army, Subedars, Dewans and Kazis, and a host of inferior officers in every province and every district followed the example of the Court, and mosques and temples, roads, canals and reservoirs attested to their wide liberality, or even to their vanity. Under wise rulers, as under foolish Kings, the proceeds of taxation flowed back to the people and fructified their trade and industries."

A work of the nature of the *Economic History of India* was bound to encounter heavy criticism from the British press for it sought to shatter the hitherto complacent and self-congratulatory attitude of the then rulers that British administration had proved an unmixed blessing to India. Nevertheless, it is a testimony to the fairness and objectivity of the British press that some among them paid handsome tributes to the writer. The *Manchester Guardian*, for instance, stated: "Mr. Dutt has woven an intelligible history of the economic policy of the Company, the accuracy and impartiality of which can hardly be questioned. . . . . "If we have failed, as assuredly we have, to maintain the conditions of an assured livelihood for great masses of the population of India, it is because we have built upon the evil policy bequeathed by a trading Company whose primary object was to draw profits for shareholders out of the taxation and trade of the country which had been placed at their disposal."

On the other hand, the *Times* was bitter in its comments. "If the general character of natives were as it appears in Mr. Dutt's pages," the *Times* stated, "not only would there be no need now of a British Empire, but that empire would never have been permitted by the natives to be formed."

Warming up to the charge of bias against Romesh Dutt, the paper added: "The literary skill and research which he has devoted to his object prove Mr. Dutt to be capable of writing history if he could for a moment put his politics aside. But the work before us is not a history; it is merely a collection of historical arguments for the use of a political sect."

#### IV

With the publication of the first volume of the *Economic History of India*, Romesh Dutt felt free to return to his motherland. He sailed from England on the 9th January 1902 and reached Madras early in February. An illustrious fellow-passenger on this voyage was Sister Nivedita (Miss Margaret Noble), a disciple of Swami Vivekananda. At Madras a joint reception was arranged for Sister Nivedita and Romesh Dutt in course of which the latter paid a handsome tribute to the lady. "I felt an unspeakable joy", he said, "that you should have thus accorded your hearty greetings to a lady who is now one of us, who lives our life, shares our joys and sorrows, partakes of our trials and troubles, and labours with us in the cause of our Motherland."

Back home, however, Romesh Dutt had no respite. In January 1902 appeared the famous Government Resolution of Lord Curzon on Land Settlements. The Resolution dealt with the various aspects of the Land Revenue System in which Romesh Dutt was deeply interested and in respect of which he had addressed his "open letters" to Lord Curzon. It took note of Romesh Dutt's views, in fact showed considerable deference to his views, but was unrelenting on the major issues involved. To start with, the Resolution misread Romesh Dutt's views and denied that the position of the Bengal cultivators had been "converted into one of

exceptional comfort" owing to the Permanent Settlement. "The Government of India indeed know of no ground whatever", the Resolution stated, "for the contention that Bengal has been saved from famine by the Permanent Settlement." In trying to discredit Romesh Dutt's views in this connection the Resolution was less than fair to him. "Sufficient stress has not been paid in the recommendations of Mr. Dutt and the memorialists," it said, "for placing a limit on the demands of the Zamindars from their *raiya*s. If it is the interests of the *raiya* that are at stake, and that stand in most urgent need of protection, that protection is not less necessary when his payments are made to a native landlord in the form of rent, than when they are made in the form of Land Revenue to the British Government."

Romesh Dutt replied to the first point of criticism and pointed out that he had not said that the Permanent Settlement had saved Bengal from famines. He had merely stated that the Bengal *raiya* was better able to withstand a famine than his less favoured brethren of Southern India. With regard to the second argument he pointed out that he had not said that the comparatively better position of the Bengal peasants was due to the Permanent Settlement alone. He had distinctly referred to the beneficial results of the Tenancy Act. Indeed, the criticism that he did not sufficiently emphasise the need for reducing the burden on the peasants was unfair to him, for long before the Government Resolution was published he had written to the *Pioneer* :

"I hold no brief for Zamindars, or talukdars, or malguzars, or landlords of any class. I hold and have held all through my official life that the actual cultivators of the soil should be lightly assessed. The cultivators are the nation in India, and if they are well off the nation is prosperous and resourceful, and famines would not be the terrible calamities that they are now."

With regard to the rates of assessment which, it was the principal contention of Romesh Dutt, were unduly high, the Resolution stated that "the standard of fifty percent of the assets is one which is almost uniformly preserved in practice and is more often departed from on the side of deficiency than of excess." A reference was also made to Romesh Dutt's demand that the land revenue should not exceed one-fifth of the gross produce, and stated in distortion of this view "that in areas where the State takes the land revenue from the cultivators, the proposal to fix the assessment at one-fifth of the gross produce would result in the imposition of a greatly increased burden upon the people." Romesh Dutt was quick in his reply. He pointed out that his demand was that one-fifth of the gross produce should be the maximum which should not be exceeded in any single case. It was not the average rate that he had suggested.

Finally, on the question of the grounds which would justify enhancement of rent, the Resolution said :

"To deny the right of the State to a share in any increase of value except those which could be inferred from the general tables of price statistics—in itself a most fallacious and partial test—would be to surrender to a number of individuals an increment which they had not themselves earned, but which had resulted partly from the outlay of Government money on great public works, such as canals and railways, and partly from the general enhancement of values produced by expanding resources and a higher standard of civilisation."

Romesh Dutt replied :

"This decision is disappointing. Increase in value is indicated by the table of prices. Lord Ripon's rule suggested, the rule framed by the memorialists also suggested, that the Government should obtain an enhancement of reve-

nues when there was such increase in prices. And they reasonably urged that the Government should claim no increase when prices had not increased. All the real advantages which the cultivators secure from new roads or lines of railway are shown in a rise in prices. . . . . When such increase takes place in temporarily settled tracts, it is a legitimate ground for enhancement of revenue at the next settlement. When no such increase has taken place, the cultivators have derived no advantage; and to claim an increase of revenue at a settlement is to drive them deeper into debt and poverty. And not to define, clearly and intelligibly, the grounds on which the State is entitled to an increase of revenue from land, is the most efficacious method that human ingenuity could devise for keeping them eternally in the gloom of uncertainty and the slough of despondency."

He concluded :

"As between landlord and tenants the Rent Acts of Bengal lay down clearly and definitely the grounds of enhancement, and Courts of Justice will allow no enhancement of rent except on those specific grounds. As between the State and the peasant proprietors no such definite grounds of enhancement of the Land Tax are laid down, and no appeal to Courts of Justice is allowed."

As these extracts would show the then Government did not accept the principal recommendations of Romesh Dutt. In fact, it denied his basic premises that unduly high assessments, more than climatic deficiencies, contributed to the recurring famines in India. Nevertheless, the controversy which Romesh Dutt had induced was not barren of results, nor were his efforts wasted. He had not only succeeded in forcing Government to concentrate attention on this important problem, but had in fact placed Government on the defensive where they had to justify the existing practices

against his reasoned arguments. It was too much to expect that an autocratic Government would immediately change their ways because of the controversy, specially when the policies they followed were derived from vested interests which they could not entirely resist. The process of change had, however, been set in motion, and this process was helped by the body of public opinion, mainly in India but to a limited extent even in England, which the controversy helped to create. The rulers of India could no longer take Indian public opinion for granted. They had also to take note of the awareness of the true facts of the British public, not definitely committed to vested interests. Ignorance and indifference are the best allies of autocracy, for autocracy thrives best when the public are unaware of the facts and apathetic to their policies. The controversy in so far as it dispelled both ignorance and apathy in respect of this important question of Land Revenue certainly contributed to a progressively more equitable solution of this problem.

## V

In December 1902, Romesh Dutt visited Delhi to witness the Durbar held by Lord Curzon to celebrate the accession of King Edward VII to the British throne. A magnificent spectacle was organised, but to a sensitive person like Romesh Dutt it held no charm. "The spectacle has not satisfied or impressed the people of India," he wrote. "What has been conceded to us?" asked the people, and people are not satisfied with a remission of interest upon loans to Native States, and a vague promise of financial relief in the indefinite future."

The Delhi Durbar provided an opportunity to review the history of British administration in India. In a letter to the *Daily News* he referred to the period between 1858 and 1877 as the age of Peace, Retrenchment and Reform.



"Frontier wars and annexations were avoided; Mysore was rendered back to native administration; the greatest Acts of Indian legislation—the Penal Code and the Civil and Criminal Procedure Codes—were passed, the Bengal Rent Act saved the cultivators of the soil from harassment and oppression; a permanent settlement of the State demand from the soil was recommended for all India; education was encouraged, and the Universities of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay were established."

The period which followed, however, from 1877 to 1903 was according to him one of Imperialism.

"Within this period we have seen two Afghan Wars and one Burmese War swelling the Indian debt by over twenty-five millions; we have seen the taxes of India forced up from thrity-five to forty-five millions, and call this the 'prosperity of India'; we have seen the army expenditure increased from twelve to eighteen millions; we have seen the liberty of the Press restricted, municipal self-government repressed, the higher services virtually closed to the people of India, railways multiplied and irrigation neglected; and we have witnessed frequent and devastating famines, more widespread and intense than any of which history keeps any record."

He passionately asked in conclusion :

"Is there none who has the power and the determination of cutting down with a merciless hand the annual drain of nearly half the revenues of India into the offices at Whitehall? Is there none who can abolish the salt tax, limit the land tax, reduce the military expenditure, promote Indian industries, open the Executive Councils and the higher services to the people, and give them a real share in the administration of their own affairs? If these reforms are denied, then the Durbar of 1903 is a mockery and a delusion, and to quote Lord Curzon's words, India will continue to be a



land 'of diminishing plenty, of empty prospects, and of justifiable discontent.' "

After the Delhi Durbar, Romesh Dutt proceeded on a tour of Andhra and Gujarat. He visited Cacanada, Rajahmundry and Hyderabad and then went to Kheda, Ahmedabad, Broach and the villages of Surat. Everywhere he was received with enthusiasm, specially in the villages, for his struggle to introduce a just system of land assessment had received wide publicity and was warmly welcomed. He responded equally enthusiastically and travelled over difficult terrain in primitive conveyances to visit small hamlets and distant villages. Speaking to the villagers in Gujarat he said :

"Occasionally the sun and the dust of March are trying to me, and long drives in bullock carts over rough country roads are sometimes too much for my old bones. But when at the end of such journeys I arrive at remote villages, see the cultivators with their women and children collected before me, speak to them in the Hindusthani language, which people in Gujarat generally understand, inspect their fields and homes, their bullocks and buffaloes, and ascertain facts relating to the produce they reap, the revenue they pay, the incomes they make and the debts they have incurred, I feel that never in my life have I done a better day's work, or have been more amply rewarded for my work. I speak to you honestly when I say that I would sooner have missed the brilliant spectacle of the late Delhi Durbar, which I saw three months ago, than the far more interesting pictures of village life in Gujarat which I have witnessed during my inquiries, and which will remain impressed on my mind as long as I live."

After the tour, the time came again for another visit to Europe. He sailed from Bombay on the 4th April 1903 and reached London on the 24th.

## VI

Back in England, Romesh Dutt turned his efforts once again to project the image of India before the British public and to advocate the Indian cause. One of his first public engagements was on the 15th July 1903 when at the Westminster Palace Hotel he read a paper on the "Peasant Proprietors of India." In the same month his letter to the *Manchester Guardian* appeared in which he angrily commented on the Government's decision that a part of the cost of maintaining the army in South Africa should be paid by India.

"What comments my countrymen will make on the honesty of the present Government!" he exclaimed. "The Government keeps 25,000 men in South Africa because it is good training ground, and will charge India with a portion of the cost because the army may be wanted in the Indian North-Western Frontier. Has Imperialism come to this? School boys in India will see through this trickery, this endeavour to screen a crude injustice by means of sophistry. Has India asked for any help from the British army within the last forty-five years? Has not India, on the contrary, lent her army to Great Britain in recent years, in China and South Africa? Should not England, in justice and equity, pay a portion of the cost of the Indian army instead of India paying a part of the expenses of the British army?"

In November, Romesh Dutt addressed a series of meetings in Lancashire on Indian subjects. Towards the end of the month, speaking in London on the "Tariff Question in India," he said: "The young mill industry required protection for a time, just as England protected her own mill industry in the early years of the nineteenth century, and as the Colonies were protecting their rising industries. To

force the exports of grain and raw material still further by preferential tariff would be cruelty to India. India would be more prosperous if she was compelled to export less of her food supply, and if she imported less of manufactured articles."

The most notable achievement of the year was, however, the publication of the second volume of the *Economic History of India* which covered the Victorian era. The first part of this era from 1838 to 1858 saw the last phase of the administration of the East India Company. In 1858, after the upheaval known to history as the Mutiny, the Queen took over the administration direct. In 1877, the Queen assumed the title of Empress of India, and a new phase of Imperialism began. Romesh Dutt's second volume traced the history of these changes down to the beginning of the twentieth century.

"The sources of a nation's wealth", said Romesh Dutt, "are Agriculture, Commerce and Manufactures, and sound Financial Administration. British rule has given India peace; but British Administration has not promoted or widened these sources of National Wealth in India." He had traced in the earlier volume how, under the Company's administration, Indian manufacturers had been stifled. In the second volume he remarked : "When Queen Victoria ascended the throne in 1837, the evil had been done. But nevertheless there was no relaxation in the policy pursued before."

With regard to Agriculture, he concluded, "Cultivation has been largely extended under the peace and security assured by the British Rule. But no man familiar with the inner life of the cultivators will say that extension of cultivation has made the nation more prosperous, more resourceful, more secure against famines."

Finally, "if we turn from the sources of wealth to its

distribution and to the financial arrangements of India," he said in the Preface to the second volume, "the same melancholy picture is presented to us." One-fourth of all the revenues derived in India, he continued, "is annually remitted to England as Home charges. And if we add to this the portion of their salaries which European officers employed in India annually remit to England, the total annual drain out of the Indian Revenues to England considerably exceeds 20 millions. The richest country on earth stoops to levy this annual contribution from the poorest. Those who earn £42 per head ask for 10 sh. per head from a nation earning £2 per head. And this 10 sh. per head which the British people draw from India impoverishes Indians, and therefore impoverishes British trade with India. The contribution does not benefit British Commerce and Trade, while it drains the life-blood of India in a continuous ceaseless flow."

In concluding his Preface, Romesh Dutt quoted John Stuart Mill that "the Government of a people by itself has a meaning and a reality, but such a thing as government of one people by another does not and cannot exist. One people may keep another for its own use, a place to make money in, a human cattle farm for the profits of its own inhabitants." "This statement contains a deep truth". Romesh Dutt commented. "Large masses of men are not ordinarily impelled by consideration of other peoples' interests. The British voter is as fair-minded as the voter in any other country on earth, but he would not be a British voter, and he would not be human, if he did not ordinarily mind his own interest and secure his own profits."

Judged on the background of the early twentieth century when they were uttered, these words of Romesh Dutt were not only well in advance of the time but summed up in essence the philosophy of the struggle for Independence

that followed. It was not the British people who were at fault, as Mahatma Gandhi taught us later, but the relationship which placed one nation in dominance over another.

On the 10th December 1903, Romesh Dutt left England for the last time to take up appointment in the Baroda Administration. His labours in Britain thus ended. For nearly seven years he had toiled ceaselessly in a foreign country to place the true picture of India before the British public. Along with his distinguished compatriots like Dadabhoj Naoroji and W. C. Bonnerjea, he addressed public meetings, corresponded with the British Press and contacted British leaders and statesmen. It was also during this sojourn in England that he produced his most important works on Indian Economics. In his first publication *Famines in India* which contained his five Open Letters to Lord Curzon he formulated and stated his views on the basic economic problems of the country. This work was followed up by the monumental work in two volumes on *Economic History of India*. As has been noticed earlier, Romesh Dutt's *Economic History* traced for the first time the economic effects of colonialism in India. It was a departure, a radical one, from the conventional economic point of view which had hitherto prevailed in this country. The effect of this work grew with the passage of time. The contemporary British society viewed it with suspicion and a certain amount of hostility. In India, it took time for the implications of the *Economic History* to be fully realised, but its effect on the economic and political movement which followed was marked.

These were no mean achievements for a short span of less than seven years. The opportunity now came for return to India, and to administration in a new field. Romesh Dutt took this opportunity and thus began a new chapter, the last one, in his distinguished and varied life of activity.

## CHAPTER X

### REVENUE MINISTER IN BARODA

At the turn of the century, Baroda was one of the best-administered Indian States in the country, and the Gaekwar one of the most progressive rulers. He had noticed Romesh Dutt's career as an administrator while he was still in service, and as early as 1895 when Romesh Dutt was officiating as Commissioner, Burdwan Division, the Gaekwar made an offer to him to join Baroda Service. At that time, Romesh Dutt had declined the offer, but had requested to be allowed to consider it after he retired from Government Service. The Gaekwar renewed the offer in 1904 and invited Romesh Dutt to serve as Revenue Minister of the State. This time he accepted the offer and joined the Service of the State in August 1904.

The appointment was generally welcomed both in India and in England. Some critics, however, regretted the fact that instead of serving the wider cause of the country as a whole Romesh Dutt had decided to restrict his activities to a comparatively small area. There was a good deal of force in this criticism, for Romesh Dutt had been engaged in, and had in fact substantially contributed to, laying the foundation for a national movement in the country. His untiring advocacy of the Indian cause in England had contributed more to the creation of national consciousness in India than to the general awareness of the Indian problem in England. His researches in Indian Economics, and in particular his monumental work on the *Economic History of India*, gave the much needed orientation to the subject from the point of view of a colonial people. Compared to this wide field



of active politics and scholarly research, the administration of an Indian State, however important from the practical point of view, did seem restricted in scope. Nevertheless, it had one great advantage. It provided Romesh Dutt the opportunity to test in real life the theories and the proposals which he had advocated and put forward.

Romesh Dutt was indeed no cloistered theoretician. His views were born out of his practical experience in administration spread over more than a quarter of a century. And yet interested critics were not wanting who characterised his views as impracticable and utopian. Here, therefore, was a chance to demonstrate in practical administration what he had preached in public life. As an interlude, a return to official life and to administrative responsibilities thus only served to further the causes he had endeavoured to advance since his retirement from the Indian Civil Service. Indeed, he looked upon his association with the Baroda administration as no more than an interlude, and when this interlude was over he hoped to return to his scholarly labours. Providence had, however, planned otherwise, and he died in harness at Baroda a few months after he had entered his fresh term of office as Dewan of the State.

As was his habit, Romesh Dutt plunged into his work with earnestness and vigour immediately on assuming his official responsibilities. His enthusiasm was indeed youthful, and he expressed it with candour in a letter to Sister Nivedita whom he called his "God-daughter".

"I am trying to strike out new lines of progress," he wrote, "to develop new policies and reforms, and am determined to move forward and to carry the State forward. I am trying to gather together the scattered forces which were present here, to encourage enterprise and talent in younger men, to welcome new ideas and new schemes, to



initiate progress in all lines, and to make Baroda a richer and a happier State. I go among the people, print and publish my schemes, face the Maharaja with my proposals, and manage to have my way in a manner which old officers of this State pronounce quite "unconventional"! I am trying to relieve the agriculturists of excessive taxation on their land, I am endeavouring to get together capitalists to start new mills and industries, and if I can build up the Legislative Council I will make the work of the State proceed in the interest of the people, and in touch with the people. Everything shall be open and above-board, nothing done in dark, tortuous, secret, autocratic ways. Dreams! Dreams! some will exclaim. Well let them be so; it is better to dream of work and progress than to wake to inaction and stagnation....."

## II

The reforms introduced during the tenure of Romesh Dutt as Revenue Minister are reflected in the annual Administration Reports of the State. In the sphere of administration, perhaps the most important change introduced was the separation of Judicial and Executive functions. As the Annual Report stated, "The officer who is virtually the plaintiff in the matter of revenue demands should not exercise magisterial powers. The officer who is the head of the District or the Taluka should be free from suspicion of doing executive work with the help of criminal powers. On these considerations His Highness resolved on a separation of functions."

Another reform introduced was the creation of the institution of Honorary Village Munsifs. The object was to associate rural representatives in the simple tasks of administration of justice, and at the same time avoid expensive and protracted litigation on comparatively simple issues. With the same object of associating the people with

judicial administration, Judicial Conferences were held in every District. The District Judges presided over such conferences and Munsifs, Magistrates and Pleaders attended them. According to one Annual Report, "Many interesting facts were elicited at the Conference held last March, and amendments of laws were suggested which are under consideration."

It was, however, in the field of Revenue Administration that Romesh Dutt tried to introduce the liberal measures which he had advocated all his life for the whole country. In a letter to the Gaekwar, while praising his liberal measures in fields such as Education and Industries, he wrote :

"But all endeavours in this direction will be vain unless we moderate the land assessment where it is excessive as each *Taluka* comes up for revision of settlement. Land assessment is more intimately related in India, as Colonel Bairdsmith said more than forty years ago, 'to the everyday life of the people, and to their growth towards prosperity or towards degradation' than any other cause that can be mentioned. If land assessment is moderated, as each *Taluka* comes up for revision of settlement, the State of Baroda can be populous, prosperous and thriving State. But if land assessment remains cruelly severe, as it did under the former Gaekwars, Baroda will continue to be a scantily populated, impoverished, resourceless State. This is the simple truth; and it is my duty as a trusted officer to state this truth plainly, and your Highness will then decide the question as you think best."

On this view, he recommended that :

(1) The Land Revenue demand of a *Taluka* should be fixed after considering what the *Taluka* had paid in the past, taking good years with bad, and can pay in the future without detriment to agricultural prosperity.

(2) No enhancement should be made unless there has

been a rise in prices, or there are other reasons, like the increase of produce or of cultivation, justifying an enhancement.

(3) No cultivator should be asked to pay more than one-half of the net produce of his field, net produce being defined as the average produce of a field minus the cost of cultivation including the fair wages of the cultivator and his family labouring in the field, and also a fair rate of interest on his agricultural stock, such as plough, bullocks, etc.

In the field of local self-government also Romesh Dutt had an opportunity to pursue his objective of associating the people with the administration of the State. The unit of local self-government in Baroda was the Village Board. Romesh Dutt built up a super-structure on the basis of this primary unit. A number of village Boards, about fifteen or sixteen, were grouped together and formed an electoral college to return a member to the *Taluka* Board. The representatives of the Village Boards along with representatives of Municipalities formed at least one half of the members of the *Taluka* Board. The remaining members were nominated by Government. The *Taluka* Boards in their turn returned representatives to the District Board. Municipalities in the District with population above ten thousand also sent their representatives to the District Board. The District Boards, like *Taluka* Boards, had at least half their members elected, the remaining half or less than half being nominated by Government.

The highest representative body in this scheme of self-government was the State Legislative Council. One-third of the members were elected by District Boards, the Baroda Municipality and the *Sardars* of the State. The remaining two-thirds were drawn from Government and included *ex-officio* members.

The hierarchy of local self-governing bodies so constituted were allotted simple functions, mainly promotion and maintenance of public works. For this purpose, they were placed in funds out of the Cess revenue, but supplemented in years of scarcity and on special occasions by grants from Government. A further step was taken to entrust deserving Village Boards with small civil and criminal powers. A pattern was thus built up which in subsequent years was reproduced in the rest of India, which sought to lay the foundation of responsible representative institutions in the country.

In the field of Education too, Baroda had stolen a march over the rest of the country. As Romesh Dutt pointed out in his first Annual Report, "the percentage of the State Revenue spent on education is 6.5 in Baroda, against 1.17 in Bengal, 1.44 in Bombay, 1.33 in Madras, and about 1 per cent in all British India." Even before Romesh Dutt's tenure of office a system of free and compulsory education had been introduced in certain specified areas of the State. In 1905, while Romesh Dutt held office as Revenue Minister, free and compulsory education was ordered to be extended throughout the State. All boys between seven and twelve and all girls between seven and ten had to attend schools under penalties for non-attendance. Four hundred Village Schools or Gramyashalas were established to impart free instruction in reading, writing and arithmetic.

Finally, industrial development received the fostering care of the Revenue Minister. The State was admittedly backward in this sphere, and in his first Report Romesh Dutt acknowledged this backwardness. "On the whole, it must be admitted", he reported, "that our record of trade and industries in Baroda is a poor one. The old industries are mostly on the decline; industries under

new methods have not yet achieved a notable success; and state enterprises have been, commercially, failures." In his Second Report, however, he had a different picture to paint. According to this Report, "The handloom industry received a great impetus in the last year, a new and simple loom, called the Sayaji loom, has been invented in our Weaving School, the number of handlooms at work has doubled in Petlad and Vasa towns; and a handloom weaving company has been formed at Nehsana. Mill industry showed an equally satisfactory progress in the last year. . . . Two new Mills have been commenced at Baroda, and a ginning factory with weaving apparatus has been established at Kadi. It may be added that the dyeing factory at Petlad is showing continued progress; the chocolate factory at Billimora has been reopened in the current year; the sugar factory at Gandevi has been transferred to private hands; and the valuable concession made to the cultivators of these parts, by bestowing on them the ownership of all date trees growing on their holdings, is likely to help the sugar industry."

### III

Throughout his life Romesh Dutt had devoted most of his attention to agriculture, and in particular to problems of land assessment. As an economist, however, he did not fail to note that for balanced economic progress of the country, industrial development had an important role to play. He had in fact, in his *Economic History*, traced the decline of Indian industries during the early British rule and had referred to this factor as one of the major reasons for the growing impoverishment of the people. During his administration of Baroda he did all he could to encourage local industries and had occasion to formulate his view on this subject not merely as a theoretical economist,

or an economic historian, but as a practical leader engaged in the task of economic development of the country. The best statement of his mature views on the role of industrial development in the economic progress of the country, and the difficulties that stood in the way of such development, are found in the Presidential address that he delivered in December 1905 at the First Industrial Conference held at Benaras.\* He referred in this Address to the two extreme views often held on the subject, and declared that truth lay midway between these two views. "One is a despondent view, a cry of despair," he said, "that Indian industries have no future against European competition, and that India is sinking lower and lower as a purely agricultural country. The other is a roseate view—that the trade of India is increasing by leaps and bounds under the British Rule, and that the increasing figures of Indian imports and exports are an index of the growth of Indian manufactures and of the prosperity of the people. I have seen the first view, the despondent view, expressed in its extremest form in our Indian newspapers. And I have heard the second view expressed in meetings held in London by Englishmen, who naturally take the trade figures as an index to the prosperity of a nation."

"As usual," he declared, "the truth lies midway. We are beset with grave difficulties, but we have no reason to despair. Our industrial condition in the present day is lamentable, but it is not hopeless." He then defined the two difficulties that stood in the way of industrial development. "In the first place our old industries have undoubtedly declined, and we have to recover lost ground. In the second place we have to recover our position under exceptional economic conditions which few nations on

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\*Full Text of the Address is given at appendix IV.



earth have to face. Our two difficulties may be briefly described thus : Firstly, other competitors have got the start of us; and secondly, we are unfairly handicapped in the race."

The first difficulty he had described in detail in his earlier writings. Quoting the British historian H. H. Wilson he summed up the early history of British rule in India by pointing out that "the British manufacturer employed the arms of political injustice to keep down, and ultimately strangle, a competitor with whom he could not have contended on equal terms." But, he stated, "Gentlemen, we will not consent to see our country made a land of raw produce, or a dumping ground for the manufactures of other nations. I do not believe a country can permanently prosper by agriculture alone any more than a country can prosper by manufactures alone; the two must thrive side by side to give employment to the population of a country." In making up for lost ground and in developing industries afresh, however, India was faced, Romesh Dutt pointed out, with unusual difficulties. In the first place, conditions in India are not favourable to accumulation of capital," for capital can be accumulated only out of savings, and the power to save presumes a surplus over the immediate needs of consumption. The growing poverty of the country left little margin for such surplus. "Our land is more heavily taxed than it is in England or America or Japan," Romesh Dutt lamented, "and the land-tax in most Provinces is enhanced at each recurring settlement. Our revenue is not all spent in India, a large portion of it is remitted for Home Charges year after year. And the highest and most lucrative appointments in the Empire are not open to us. All these facts tell against the accumulation of capital needed for large enterprises, and our moneyed men are poor compared to



those in other lands." But the greatest hindrance to the development of industries in India was, as Romesh Dutt declared, the fiscal legislation of the then Government "which is oftener controlled by Lancashire than by us in the country." As an example, he added, "you all remember how Lord Lytton's Government was compelled to repeal the import duties on cotton goods against the advice and vote of every Member of Lord Lytton's Council except Sir John Strachey and the Military Member. And when the import duties were re-imposed, you remember how Lord Elgin's Government was compelled to impose an excise duty on the mill-produce of India to conciliate Lancashire. I know of no act in modern fiscal legislation more unwise and hurtful to an infant industry than the imposition of an excise tax, unknown in any civilised country. And I know of nothing more humiliating to the Government of a great Empire like India than the correspondence which you will find recorded in Parliamentary Blue Books, leading to these fiscal changes."

These were tremendous difficulties for any nation to face. A country held not only under political but also under economic subjection in the interests of the governing country to provide cheaper raw-materials to the latter and a market for its wares could not be expected to develop her industries and thus compete with the ruling country. India at the end of the nineteenth century provided the classic example of colonialism, and colonialism would be untrue to its own pattern if it encouraged the growth of industries, and thus instead of perpetrating itself tended sooner or later to disrupt the pattern. The logic of colonialism, its sinister pattern, was clear enough to Romesh Dutt, and yet he had sufficient faith in his country and sufficient optimism about her future to believe that even these obstructions presented by a colonial regime could be

overcome. "I mention these difficulties," he stated, "not to discourage you, but because you have to face and conquer them. Few countries on earth would have succeeded under these difficulties, but I have faith in the capacities of our nation, in the patience and skill of our artisans, in the adaptability of our race to new methods, in the resources of our wonderful land, and in the advantages of cheap labour." In a final exhortation to face the difficulties he urged, "I think it better to fight and to fail than not to fight at all; but in this industrial movement I believe we are destined to fight and to conquer. I have no patience with those of my countrymen who throw up their hands in despair, and declare that all is lost."

He was indeed right. India was destined to fight—and in this process to overcome the obstacles of colonialism by overthrowing the system. The "fight" took a course perhaps not envisaged by Romesh Dutt, but his counsel to fight and not to give in to despair was a counsel of hope and faith which stimulated his countrymen at an hour when the prospects were gloomy and the silver lining had yet to appear on the horizon. And yet, it would be wrong to think that Romesh Dutt was reconciled to the colonial regime and advised his countrymen to fight only the symptoms of colonialism and not the system itself. The first militant assertion of nationalism against the inequities of a colonial system came to India in the form of the *Swadeshi* movement in the first decade of the twentieth century. It not merely preached preference for things Indian, but sought to provide an answer by voluntary sacrifice, if necessary, to the fiscal legislation over which India had no control but which was framed in the interests of the ruling race. It was thus an act of defiance, peaceful and constitutional though it sought to be, and was the precursor of other acts

of defiance and non-cooperation which later marked the struggle for freedom.

Significantly, Romesh Dutt in his Presidential address extended his whole-hearted support to the *Swadeshi* movement. "Neither the rare instances of disturbance, nor the unwise measures of repression, are a part and parcel of the *Swadeshi* scheme", he declared. "The essence of the scheme, as I understand it, is by every lawful method, to encourage and foster home industries, and to stimulate the use of home manufactures among all classes of people in India. Gentlemen, I sympathise with this movement with all my heart, and will cooperate with this movement with all my power."

He went further to justify the *Swadeshi* movement, and added : "The *Swadeshi* Movement is one which all nations on earth are seeking to adopt in the present day. Mr. Chamberlain is seeking to adopt it by a Scheme of Protection, Mr. Balfour seeks to adopt it by a Scheme of Retaliation, France, Germany, the United States, and all the British Colonies adopted it by building up a wall of prohibitive duties. We have no control over our fiscal legislation, and we adopt the *Swadeshi* Scheme therefore by a laudable resolution to use our home manufactures, as far as practicable, in preference to foreign manufactures. I see nothing that is sinful, nothing that is hurtful in this. I see much that is praiseworthy and much that is beneficial".

Finally, he concluded with the exhortation and the warning : "If we succeed in this noble endeavour, we shall present to the world an instance, unparalleled in the history of modern times, of a nation protecting its manufactures and industries without protective duties. If we fail in this great endeavour, and prove ourselves false to the resolution we have formed and professed, then we shall deserve to remain

in that state of industrial serfdom to other nations from which we are struggling to be free."

## IV

At Baroda, away from his home State and yet in his own country, Romesh Chunder lived a life which demonstrated the basic unity of India. He collected around him persons from different communities and States and knit them together into a happy group—with complete identity of outlook. His most intimate friends were the Mehtas and the Tyabjis. He loved Sharada (wife of Dr. Mehta) and Sharifah (daughter of Mr. Tyabji) as his own daughters. On a New Year's Day he addressed the following poem to them :

“One, a mother young and beauteous,  
One, a nobly gifted maid,  
Blessed me with their sweet affection,  
Sang to me and often played,  
Till my soul was drunk with music,  
Till my heart was wrapt in love,  
Ever, even as my daughters,  
They shall my affection prove!  
One, a gentle Hindu mother,  
One, a duteous Moslem maiden,  
In their loves they are united,  
Like two creepers perfume laden!  
Sister streams that sweetly mingled,  
Sister blossoms on one s'em.  
Creeds might differ, love of duty,  
Love of country blended them!  
They were of the Western region,  
I was from the farthest East;  
How their truth and tender sweetness  
Filled my heart, my cottage blest!

Earth hath streaks of light and sunshine,  
Life hath gleams that cheer and bless;  
May the memory of their kindness,  
Never in my heart grow less !

Romesh Chunder's patriotism and his undoubted national feeling found expression in yet another poem he addressed to the *Begum of Janjira* :

"Be it still thy lofty purpose,  
For that sacred land to toil,  
Help the son of loom and anvil,  
Raise the tiller of the soil.

Trust in duty humbly rendered,  
Trust in India's future star,  
And our unborn sons and daughters,  
Shall be higher than we are !

Unseen clouds will often darken  
Glamour of the brightest day;  
Doubt and discord and disaster,  
Oft will bar our onward way;

But the brother and the sister,  
Man great-hearted, woman true,  
Proudly sweep aside each hindrance,  
Serve the land their fathers knew !

Caste and Creed will often wrangle,  
Tear apart those who are one,  
Greed and selfishness will hinder,  
What by selfless work is won;

But true-hearted men and women,  
Moslem or of Hindu faith,  
Love of men their high religion,  
Serve their country until death."

At Baroda, thanks to the broad and non-parochial views of the Gaekwar who had the knack of selecting the best available men for service in his State, Romesh Dutt found himself working in a team drawn on merits from all parts of the country. The Dewan and the Minister of Education were Parsis, the Chief Medical Officer and the acting Chief Justice, Muslims, the Revenue Commissioner and the Chief Engineer, Gujaratis, and the permanent Chief Justice, a Maharashtrian, apart from the Principal of the Baroda College who was a Bengali. In this all-India team, Romesh Dutt, himself a Bengali, fitted in with ease and indeed occupied a prominent place. It inspired in him, as his poems which have been quoted indicate, visions of a united India where men and women drawn from all parts of the country and professing different religions and creeds would work together for the common good of the Motherland. He delighted in this vision and laboured to give concrete shape to his dream and make Baroda a model State in the country.

And yet his heart was longing for literary labours rather than for administrative duties. In a letter to his brother written in December 1906, he outlined his scheme to write a history of the Indian people from the ancient times to 1900 A.D. "It will be in some six big volumes, and will record once for all an Indian view of India's ancient civilisation, of the condition and the progress of the people under the Muhammedans, and of British administration during 150 years." Fate had, however, ordained otherwise, for he died in harness before he had the leisure to turn to his scholarly labours, and his apprehension that it might turn out to be a "noble idea that died" unfortunately came true.

## CHAPTER XI

### MEMBER DECENTRALISATION COMMISSION

In June 1906, Romesh Dutt proceeded once again to England for a brief period of rest and recreation. He needed the rest, for he had worked hard, and his constitution, strong as it was, had begun to feel the strain. A pain in the heart caused him trouble, and eminent physicians in Bombay as well as in England advised him prolonged rest. His heart was declared to be sound, but he needed rest to improve his general health, and it was for a change and rest that he planned to spend three months in England. A change of environment, after his hard administrative labours at Baroda, he certainly had in England, but not complete rest. The Partition of Bengal had convulsed his home State, and he was determined to do what he could to persuade Government to undo the wrong.

The atmosphere in India was fast changing, and what was then regarded as extremism was in the air, along with the cult of violence. In this situation, Romesh Dutt felt, the only wise course was for Government to introduce reforms in administration and to associate Indians with the work of government. A feeling of frustration and helplessness, he felt, had gripped the minds of the educated Indians, and this could be removed only by their participation in the government of the country. To deny such participation would encourage the trend towards lawlessness and violence, and discredit those who counselled such participation within the broad frame-work of the British Empire. The first endeavour of Romesh Dutt, therefore, was to



secure annulment of the partition of Bengal, and then to influence the authorities to introduce a measure of reform which would provide for greater association of Indians with the government of the country.

He reached London on the 25th June 1906, and started immediately on a round of interviews. He met the then Secretary of State for India, John Morley, the Parliamentary Under Secretary, Ellis, and the Permanent Under Secretary, Sir Arthur Godley, apart from a number of prominent members of Parliament. Along with Gopal Krishna Gokhale he addressed groups of Parliament members, and put forward the Indian point of view. At the end of the first month of his sojourn in England he was optimistic enough to write in a letter to one of his grand-daughters : "The Partition will not be undone immediately, because Morley has said it is a 'settled thing' but I do not despair of its being modified later on. . . . . I will retire from Baroda next year," he added, "pass a month or so in Calcutta, and then come and settle down in England, and work with much greater hope of success than I had done within the last nine years under a Tory Government and Lord Hamilton ! I feel like a war-horse at the sound of the bugle!"

Apart from this work, Romesh Dutt spent the remaining time in England during this visit to recuperate his health and have a complete rest. He spent as much time as he could for this purpose at Buxton which he considered "the most bracing placing in England." This period of his holiday, however, witnessed the death of his friend and colleague, W. C. Bonnerjea, to whose "great moderation and sterling patriotism" he paid eloquent tribute. Two other great Indian lives came to an end during this year. They were those of Ananda Mohan Bose and Justice Badruddin Tyabji. "The men of the earlier generation who

had worked for India during the last twenty-five years", Romesh Dutt remarked at their death, "were passing away, and the time was approaching when the work will fall on the shoulders of the younger members." He hoped that the example of such men as Badruddin Tyabji and Bose would inspire them to be always faithful and true to their country, and to work with wisdom and moderation.

## II

In 1907, Romesh Dutt was appointed by the then Secretary of State for India, Lord Morley, to be a member of the Royal Commission on Decentralisation. He was the only Indian member of the Commission, which was presided over initially by Sir Henry Primrose, and subsequently, on his resignation, by Mr. Charles Hobhouse. The other members of the Commission were Sir Frederic Lely, Sir Steyning Edgerley, Sir W. S. Meyer and Mr. W. L. Hitchens, with Mr. H. Wheeler of the Indian Civil Service as Secretary.

The Commission was appointed to examine the administrative machinery of Government and to recommend measures of decentralisation. It had nothing to do as such with the political question of the measure of self-government to be introduced in the administration of the country. Administrative decentralisation, however, meant that administrative decisions should be taken as near the areas affected by such decision as possible. Proposals for such decentralisation could not, therefore, be entirely divorced from the machinery of administration, and in particular from the problem of association of persons affected by the administrative decisions with the machinery responsible for the decisions. It was natural, therefore, that the recommendations of the Decentralisation Commission should have a bearing on the political decision on the reform of the

administration. This was in fact recognised by His Majesty's Government who wanted the Commission to communicate to them in advance the main conclusions to be embodied in their Report, so that these conclusions could be taken into account in determining the nature and extent of the Reform then under contemplation by the Government.

No field of activity would have interested Romesh Dutt more than that which the Decentralisation Commission was asked to examine. He was intensely interested, as has already been noted, in promoting representative institutions in India and in providing for greater association of Indians with the making and implementation of vital decisions affecting the country. He had spent about nine years in England demanding, advocating and pleading for the necessary reforms, but in the absence of a constitutional machinery for making his views felt at the appropriate level in Government, he had to be content with knocking at the doors, closed or half-closed, from outside. Now for the first time since his retirement from service he had an opportunity to give expression to his views in an official report which Government was morally bound to consider; and not being in service he was free to do so without the restriction which service imposed on its members.

There was obviously a certain amount of doubt in the British Government about how the so-called "radical" views of Romesh Dutt would fit into the sedate atmosphere of an official Commission. In October 1907, in a personal letter addressed to Romesh Dutt, Lord Morley, the then Secretary of State for India found it necessary to advise him : "I hope that you will take an active part, but of course if it should unhappily take a turn—I mean your part in it—of mere partisanship, it will no doubt prove wholly ineffective. You will not take it amiss that I should say so much as this.

If there is to be any effective advance at all, it can only be secured by reasonable cooperation. Irrational demands "for the moon", as I have put it, can only end in futility and confusion, and we may as well face that certainty from the first."

The Decentralisation Commission commenced its work towards the end of 1907, toured India in the cold weather of 1907-08, covering about 12,300 miles, and examined 307 witnesses, including 119 non-officials. The Commission visited all the Provincial headquarters, obtained a statement of views and proposals from each Provincial Government and examined a large number of high officials who could speak on matters of general policy. The Commission also examined officials connected with District administration, including a large number of Indians. Invitations were extended through the Press, or direct by the Commission, to persons who could give useful views on subjects under consideration.

With the completion of the work of examination of witnesses and collection of data, the Commission proceeded to England in the summer of 1908 to prepare its Report and wind up its affairs. The Report of the Commission published towards the end of 1908 contained *inter alia* the following important recommendations :

- (1) That the principles of Land Revenue assessments should be settled by law, instead of being left to executive order.
- (2) That Government in the larger Provinces should consist of a Governor and not less than four members, including qualified Indian members.
- (3) That village Panchayats should be created, and should decide petty cases, execute minor village

works, maintain village schools, and manage fuel and fodder reserves.

- (4) That District and Sub District Boards should have a substantial majority of elected members.
- (5) That Municipal Councils should have a substantial majority of elected members and should ordinarily elect non-official Chairmen.

These were important recommendations, entirely consistent with Romesh Dutt's line of thinking. They did not amount to any recognisable measure of self-government, but that was to be a political decision, outside the purview of the Decentralisation Commission. The Commission's recommendations, however, provided for association of the people and their representatives at the levels of District and Village administration. This was a step in the right direction, though one can claim that it did not go far enough. Romesh Dutt would have personally liked to go further, but the official climate at the time did not permit longer steps to be taken. Even within the limits of feasibility, Romesh Dutt had his differences with the majority of the members of the Commission. He differed from them in particular on the following issues :

(1) The majority of the Commission members did not consider it necessary to have an Advisory Council attached to the District Officer to help him to administer the District. Romesh Dutt was strongly in favour of such a Council, for he felt that the one-man rule in the District was the cause of much discontent in India.

Romesh Dutt felt very strongly on this issue. In a letter to the Lieutenant Governor of Bengal that he wrote in April 1909, he stated his position frankly :

"In district administration we get no active help from the people; even when we are trying to repress crime and

punish criminals, the sympathies of the people are sometimes against us. This is lamentable, but very natural; it is not natural for people to sympathise with an administration in which they have no share, with an alien one-man rule of the District Officer without popular advice. This should be remedied. Failing the creation of Advisory Councils, the District Boards should be used as such, and should be convened and consulted on all general matters affecting the district,— Drainage, Irrigation, Water supply, Relief, Repression of crimes, Settlements, Liquor shops, Industries, Technical education, pasture lands, forest rules, timber, fuel, new crops, water rates, feeder line, and a hundred other subjects."

(2) The majority of the Commission members recommended that the District Officer should always be the President of the District Board. This again, Romesh Dutt could not agree with. If the people are not trusted to manage even the simple tasks of administration, he argued, Government could not expect responsive cooperation from them. He quoted Lord Ripon in this connection who in a Government Resolution as early as 1882 had directed that the official control of the District Boards should be exercised from outside rather than from within.

(3) A third point on which he differed from the majority was the suggestion that a general Delegation Act should be passed, empowering Government to alter Legislative Acts by Executive Notifications, in order to delegate general powers to lower officials. Romesh Dutt considered such an Act bad in principle, in fact dangerous, and a breach of faith if applied in altering Acts already in force.

(4) Another point of difference was the recommendation favoured by the majority that the Divisional Commissioners should have the power to invest first class Magistrates



and Sub-Divisional officers with criminal appellate powers. Romesh Dutt was of the view that this would endanger administration of justice and shake the confidence of the people in the judicial system.

### III

In the spring of 1908 Romesh Dutt made his last journey to England. He accompanied the Decentralisation Commission which proceeded to London to write its Report and wind up its affairs. The work of the Commission kept him busy for the first few months, but he had other interests to pursue. Even while in India, he had started a correspondence with Lord Morley trying to persuade him to offer a measure of representative Government to India which would pacify at least the moderate elements in the country, and thus deprive the "extremists" of their *raison d'être*. As a leader who all his life had believed and followed not only peaceful and constitutional methods, but methods of persuasion rather than of defiance, Romesh Dutt along with the men of his generation was alarmed at the growing estrangement of the people of India from the Government of the country, and at the increasing trend towards defiant action not unmingled at that initial period of India's struggle for freedom with outbursts of terrorism and violence. In a letter which he wrote from India to Lord Morley in January 1908, he referred to the Partition of Bengal and said : "For one thing, the Partition has strengthened the hands of the extremists all over India, and is a god-send to them. The despair of influencing administration by persuasion and reason drove thousands of men to the camp of unreason, until a few feather-brained talkers grew to be a formidable party."

For the best part of his life Romesh Dutt had served the British Empire in India which he genuinely believed, as



he stated in his Preface to *Victorian Age*, to be "the most superb of human institutions in modern times." And yet his later experience showed that the institution which he had praised failed to move with the times. He had been pleading for years for representative institutions and for greater association of the people with the administration of the country in order that their views and aspirations could be taken into account in formulating vital administrative decisions. Years of Conservative rule in England had witnessed no progress in this direction. On the other hand colossal mistakes had been made, like the Partition of Bengal, which roused the emotions of the people. Instead of rectifying such mistakes, Government had initiated a policy of repression which only helped to fan the flames and to exacerbate the emotions of the people even further. For the first time, people were beginning to be disillusioned about progress through peaceful methods of persuasion. To Romesh Dutt the disillusionment was painful. It presented him with a dilemma. He saw clearly that if Government persisted in their ways the political beliefs which he had cherished all his life would be discredited; and yet, how could he forsake these beliefs towards the end of his life! In his anguish, he wrote to Lord Morley, in the same letter from which an extract has been quoted :

"Why should not the British rule be a popular rule in this loyal country, British officers consenting to share with the leaders of the people the task of settling the policy and the details of administration? Why should not Indian leaders proudly stand by the side of devoted British administrators, and work for the great Empire which they may then both call their own?"

But scepticism was creeping into Romesh Dutt's views also, and he added :

"Such questions receive no response from officials gene-

rally, the history of the world seldom records instances of men in power consenting to share it with those over whom they rule. But it is a New Year's hope to me, as it has been my life-long aspiration. Either such cooperation, or a widening gulf with increasing discontent and disorder, is before us; there is no alternative."

This was Romesh Dutt's principal mission during his last visit to England. A scheme of "Reform" of the Government of India was then under active consideration of the Secretary of State for India. Certain proposals had been received from the Governor-General and these were being put to shape. The Secretary appointed a Committee of his Council under the chairmanship of Lord MacDonnell to work out a concrete scheme. This was particularly fortunate, for Lord MacDonnell, a former member of the Indian Civil Service, had been a colleague of Romesh Dutt in the Bengal Administration. This gave him an opportunity to place his point of view before the appropriate authorities. Along with Gokhale, who was also in England at the time, he pressed for a real measure of reform which would help to turn the tide of events in India by giving greater opportunities to the Indians to influence the course of administration in the country.

The "Reforms" were announced by Lord Morley in the British Parliament in December 1908. These made certain concessions, the more important of which were :

- (1) That an Indian member should be appointed to the Viceroy's Executive Council.
- (2) That there should be a non-official majority in the Provincial Legislative Councils.
- (3) That the Provincial Legislative Councils should have larger powers in settling the Provincial

Budgets, though the Budgets would be subject to acceptance by the Government.

- (4) That the Provincial Legislative Councils should have powers to discuss questions of general interest in relation to executive administration.
- (5) That Governor's Executive Councils should be formed in the larger Provinces with one or more Indians as members.
- (6) That the Local Self-Government Scheme of 1882 prepared by Lord Ripon should be given effect to, and that instead of official control being exercised from within by the District Magistrates being chairman of District Boards, such control should be exercised from outside.
- (7) That Village Self-Government should be organised to form the basis of District Self-Government.

Judged by modern standards, these changes would certainly be regarded as halting and completely inadequate. They had indeed been conceded grudgingly, and after years of inaction. Nevertheless, judged in the contemporary context, whatever their extent might be, the changes conceded for the first time the principle which Indian leaders in the nineteenth century had sought to establish, namely, that representative Indians should be associated with the administration of the country. The process of change had been set in motion, and this by itself was a vindication of Indian opinion. The theory of gradualism often stressed by the rulers to defer, if not prevent, transfer of power from their own hands may not have the validity that is claimed for it, but a change cannot occur until circumstances are ripe for it. In the history of the world, freedom has never been a gift from the rulers; it has never come in advance of its time. It has been won by people who by their very struggle have matured for it.

The Minto-Morley Reforms, as the changes under reference came to be known, were no exception to this rule. The leaders of the nineteenth century like Romesh Dutt had for years worked for the change, and had created the necessary atmosphere for it. The fact that the change had come though belatedly, as is often the case with such changes, showed that the circumstances were ripe for it. It was the first change of its kind, and was a recognition of the fact that the political atmosphere of the country had begun to change. This by itself was a matter of gratification for the leaders who had worked for the change and had created the circumstances in which the "Reform" could no longer be resisted. But the "Reform" had a greater significance, much beyond the extent of the change that it conceded. It set in motion the process of change, recognized the need for conceding the demand for self-government, however partially, and thereby in its turn accelerated the process of the change of circumstances and the atmosphere in the country which made further concession by the ruling power inevitable. The process which the Minto-Morley Reform set in motion in 1908, reached its consummation in less than forty years, and though the process was by no means smooth and unobstructed, the inevitable culmination came with the complete transfer of power on the 15th August, 1947.

This culmination was not foreseen in 1908, nor was the process of change leading to it anticipated at that distance of time, but leaders like Romesh Dutt who were responsible for the first phase of the progress towards independence had reason to congratulate themselves on initiating the process. It is seldom given to men, however great and gifted, to foresee the processes of history in motion over about half a century. It is sufficient that the immediate objectives over limited periods are achieved. The objective which

Romesh Dutt had set to himself had been recognised, if not achieved, and he acknowledged it in an article which he wrote for the *Indian Review* in 1909.

"The Reforms announced by Lord Morley in his Despatch of November, and in his speech of December," he wrote, "are solid and substantial, and are precisely in the direction in which the Indian National Congress had demanded Reforms during the last twenty years and more. In one word, the changes announced are calculated to give the people of India a substantial share in the control and direction of their own concerns. The voice of the people will find expression through recognised official channels; the wishes and opinions of the people will influence and shape the internal administration of the country."

He was right. The process of change had been initiated, the direction had been set. Credit for this went to leaders like Dadabhai Naoroji, Surendra Nath Banerjea, W. C. Bonnerjea, Gopal Krishna Gokhale and Romesh Dutt. It was now for their successors and for the people of India to carry the process further, accelerate the tempo of change and achieve the desired objective of a complete transfer of power.

## CHAPTER XII

### DEWAN OF BARODA

With Romesh Dutt's return to India, at the end of March 1909, began the last chapter of his life. It was a brief chapter, but the shadow of the sudden end had not cast itself yet. He was in the midst of life, rejoicing at the success of his cause and striving to advance it further. The Minto-Morley Reforms which had just been announced had given him satisfaction. The measures were largely in the direction he had sought. He looked forward to a period when the new arrangements would be implemented in practice to the benefit of the country. He was prepared to take his share in it.

Soon after his return to India, Government announced the appointment of S. P. Sinha (later Lord Sinha) as the first Indian member of the Viceroy's Executive Council. The announcement was hailed by Romesh Dutt, for he had long pleaded for the association of Indians in the highest administrative Council of the country to enable the Indian point of view in important matters of administration to be taken due note of. He arranged a reception at his house in Calcutta in Sinha's honour, and described the party with child-like delight in a letter to his daughter.

After spending a few weeks in Calcutta, Romesh Dutt proceeded for a further holiday to Shillong. There he was joined by his life-long friend, Bihari Lal Gupta, and the two spent a delightful time in what they described as "the pleasantest hill station we have seen."

On the 1st June 1909, Romesh Dutt took charge as the Dewan of Baroda, succeeding the former Dewan Kershaspji

who had retired. On his advice, the Gaekwar also appointed his friend Bihari Lal Gupta as the Legal Remembrancer of the State. The two friends were happy to work together and looked forward to a fruitful period of cooperation in the interests of the State. Providence had, however, willed otherwise, for his tenure as Dewan was short-lived.

Romesh Dutt, as has been noted, had complained of a pain in his heart as early as 1906. He had consulted eminent physicians, and he had been advised prolonged rest. He had accepted the advice, for as he put it himself "Nature had given me a warning which I should not neglect." He had snatched periods of rest in his busy life, and the rest had done him good. The pain had disappeared, except occasionally at times of stress. He had had himself examined before accepting the Dewanship of Baroda, and his heart had been pronounced to be sound.

The duties of a Dewan were, however, strenuous. "It is a hard grind here," he said, "and the hard-worked administrator is not his own master." As was characteristic of him, Romesh Dutt threw himself heart and soul into his work. The last straw, however, came with the visit of Lord and Lady Minto to the State. The visit entailed a great deal of work, for which the burden and responsibility fell on Romesh Dutt. His heart which needed rest could bear it no longer. At the State Banquet to the visitors on the 15th November 1909, Romesh Dutt felt the pain in his heart again, this time more intense and prolonged than ever before. Even so, he would not give up, nor draw attention to himself. Bathed in perspiration and in great agony, he went through the dinner, and got up only when all other guests did so. It was a great act of self-control, and of devotion to duty, but it cost him his life. His heart was irreparably damaged in the process. When he went to bed that evening the disease had taken a turn which the most



skilled medical care available at the time and the most loving nursing by his wife and daughter could not cure.

His life lingered on painfully for another fortnight. His wife and his son were summoned to his bed-side from Calcutta, but every day his condition took a turn for the worse. The agony was almost unbearable. According to his friend, Bihari Lal Gupta who stayed with him throughout his illness :

“For days and nights together, he could not lie down on a bed or even in an easy-chair in a reclining posture, but had to sit up and stoop in front to give relief to the heart and lungs. There was much difficulty of breathing, and on account of the failing heart the doctors forbade all movement.”

And yet, he would not complain, nor allow himself a groan of agony. He bore the ordeal for a fortnight while anxious enquiries were made through all hours of the day by the people of Baroda, of all communities and creeds. The Maharaja and the Maharani kept in close touch, and the former called more than once. The inevitable end, however, came and at about 2 a.m. on the 30th November 1909, life ebbed away. Thus a worthy life drew to a close.

## II

The funeral of Romesh Dutt bore ample testimony to the feelings of love, affection and regard that he had evoked among all classes of people at Baroda. The Maharaja ordered full military honours for the funeral. The body was laid on a palanquin and preceded by forty “sowars” of the Hazrat Cavalry and eleven horsemen of Choti Khas Baga. It was followed by Sardars and officers of the State, and cremated, with special dispensation from the Maharaja,

on the banks of Biswamitra on a ground specially reserved for the royalty. But State honours apart, a moving tribute was paid by the people of Baroda, Hindus, Muslims and Parsis, who hailed him as "*Garib ka dost*."\* As the pyre was lighted, a deep silence fell on the gathering, broken only by funeral orations of the leading men of Baroda.

The disappointment of Baroda at his death was understandable. It was only a few months ago that Romesh Dutt had assumed charge of the highest administrative post of the State as its Dewan. Great things were expected of him. He had not only an all-India reputation as an administrator, a scholar, a reformer and a man of letters, but he had in fact as Revenue Minister of Baroda introduced a number of wholesome changes. The people of Baroda, therefore, naturally looked forward to a period of enlightened administration with Romesh Dutt as the Dewan, but Nature had snatched him away when he had hardly completed six months in his new post. The feeling of disappointment at his death was most eloquently expressed by a leading citizen of Baroda, Lala Atmaram, who compared the grief of the people of Baroda at Romesh Dutt's death to the grief of the people of Kausala when Shri Ram Chandra had to go to the forest as an exile instead of reigning over them.

But it was not Baroda alone that was grieved at the death of a distinguished administrator. India had lost a worthy son, whose contributions to diverse fields of the country's life were as varied as they were substantial. The country mourned the loss, and it was natural that handsome tributes were paid to his memory. Tributes also flowed from overseas, specially from England, for his association with that country had been long and intimate, and though

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\*Friend of the poor

he had his differences with the British rulers, there was a tie of mutual esteem and regard that bound him to the nobler and the more liberal elements in that country.

Among the tributes paid to him by the eminent personalities of the time, the foremost was that of Poet Rabindranath.

"Of all the far-sighted and wise leaders of India," he said, "he undoubtedly occupied the foremost place. At this critical moment of our national life, what a heavy and irreparable loss his death is to the community must be apparent to every thoughtful Indian."

Sister Nivedita in a personal message to his widow touchingly exclaimed :

"Few women have so noble a record to cherish as yours, so great a name to carry, so lofty a pride ! He was so splendid through and through!"

And a more fulsome tribute she paid to his memory in an article contributed by her to the *Modern Review* of Calcutta. She wrote :

"Unassuming, simple, generous to a fault, the expression might be modern, but the greatness within was the ancient greatness. Romesh Chunder Dutt was a man of his own people. The object of all he ever did was not his own fame, but the uplifting of India. That gained, what matters it to him, the illustrious dead, whether a book or two, more or less live or die? But it matters to his countrymen, matters to all eternity, that they should not fail in his meed of reverent salutation, that the voice of criticism should be hushed, and cleverness stand silent while they carry to the funeral pyre one who stands amongst the fathers of the future, one who dreamt high dreams and worked at great things untiringly, yet left behind him, before the country's altar, no offering so noble, no proof of her greatness so in-

controvertible as that one thing of which he never thought at all—his own character and his own love !”

The country sighed in distress, and the sigh could be heard wherever his countrymen were, from the remote, inaccessible hamlets of Bengal which he had loved so well, to the sophisticated cities and universities, in India and overseas, where the citizens and the students had learnt to appreciate his scholarly labours for his country and his unflinching efforts to advance the cause of India towards democracy and progress. The Indian press rang with tributes to the illustrious dead. The *Statesman*, the *Bengalee* and the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* of Calcutta, the *Indian Nation* of Patna and the *Hindu* of Madras vied with one another in placing before the country their appreciation of the life and work of their countryman. Even the British Press, though not conceding the correctness of his views, paid tributes to his greatness and ability. Prof. Lees Smith of the London School of Economics testified to this when he stated that he had been “struck with the large amount of space devoted to Mr. Dutt in the English papers, a fact which showed that the people of England were beginning to reckon the great men of India among their own great men.”

The point of view naturally differed, and while the Indian Press referred appreciatingly to his economic views the British Press was critical. The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* of Calcutta for instance said : “His ‘Open Letters’ to Lord Curzon, on the vital question of the too heavy burden of land tax in India, and his reply to Lord Curzon’s official reply in the shape of his exhaustive *Economic History of India* are, so to say, indispensable text-books to students of the intricate subject of revenue administration in India.” The *Times* of London, on the other hand, commented : “The death of Mr. Dutt deprives the Indian Moderates of a respected and dignified figure. His services to Bengali lite-

ature and Indian Economics were great. His reputation as a land revenue expert suffered an irretrievable shock when the errors and fallacies of his letters to Lord Curzon were exposed in the famous resolution explaining and defining the Government policy."

Fallacies indeed. The "fallacies" were cherished by his countrymen, who saw for the first time in Romesh Dutt's economic teaching what colonialism could do to the economics of a country which had, before the colonial regime, enjoyed a reasonable measure of prosperity. It would, however, be wrong to hold that this narrow spirit of criticism arising out of political interests marred the appreciation of the British Press of a truly great son of India. On the contrary, the tributes paid by some of the leading organs of British public opinion were fulsome and unreserved. The *Daily News* (London), for instance, after describing the distinguished career and the notable literary achievements of Romesh Dutt, said :

"As a critic of the land revenue system he crossed swords with Lord Curzon; as a social and political reformer he wielded an influence which was felt throughout the whole of India. Mr. Dutt was for some years resident in England, and latterly was a frequent visitor to Europe. His circle of friends in this country was unusually large, and his death in the full vigour of elderhood will be felt as a personal loss by hundreds of English men and women who admired in Romesh Chunder Dutt a broad and genial spirit, a fine intellect and character, and capacity for statesmanship which would have given him a notable position in any company of public men in the world."

### III

Time is a great leveller, and History a stern judge. The exuberance of emotions which proximity to events induces,

fades away with time, until the events are reduced to their proper level in their historical perspective. In the process, history is ruthless, but in the long run, history is also just. A martyr unrecognised by contemporary society and subjected to the indignities of martyrdom gains in stature in the historical process. Ultimately, only those survive the ravages of time who deserve to, by virtue of their achievements.

The immediate emotions aroused by Romesh Chunder's death have been noted. They undoubtedly indicate the depth of the impact he made on contemporary society. Most of the reactions aroused in India were naturally favourable, because he had rendered substantial service to the country and had strongly advocated the country's cause. Some of the reactions abroad, particularly in England, were equally naturally unfavourable, for he had stood for a course of action which was then regarded, however erroneously, as contrary to the interests of that country.

Almost six decades have, however, passed since Romesh Chunder died. India has attained her freedom, and Britain is a willing partner along with other friendly countries in her development. The relation of the ruler and the ruled in the context of which Romesh Chunder lived and worked is now a matter of history. But what is his contribution to this happy consummation? What is his contribution to the building up of modern India? Perhaps six decades are not long enough for history to record its verdict, but now that the objective he had lived and worked for has been attained, though the course of events which led up to it and also its final shape have been different from what he had visualised, it is possible to make a more dispassionate assessment of his contribution thereto. Such an assessment is necessary for contemporary society as well as for the future generations in order to appreciate fully the

mechanism of the revolutionary change which took place in India in the first half of the twentieth century. This work will be incomplete without an attempt being made towards such an assessment of the contribution made by an outstanding Indian of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century who along with a number of his illustrious countrymen provided the motive force behind these revolutionary changes.



## CHAPTER XIII

### SOME PERSONAL ASPECTS

"But thou art greater than thy achievement", so sang the poet Rabindranath of Emperor Shah Jehan and of the imperishable monument that he had built, the Taj Mahal. History records the deeds of great men, or to be more precise, it records the progress of human society to which the deeds and achievements of great men make their contribution. The men behind the achievements are often forgotten; and yet from the human point of view, as the Poet has said, a man counts far more than his achievements. The work and achievement of a man is as much the result of the circumstances in which he lives, often accidental, as of his own personality. The object of all human endeavour, however, is man himself. The development of human personality is, therefore, of supreme importance, and the personality of a great man, representing as it does a higher stage of development than that attained by most others of his time, is of greater significance than his achievements. Such a personality not only marks a stage of development, however partial, in this ultimate objective of all human endeavour, but by his own example and conduct contributes to the further development of human personality. A Buddha or a Gandhi is great not merely because of what he achieved in his life-time, but more so because he represented a high stage in the development of human personality and by his example helped in creating better men, both in his life-time and in the future generations.

We have in the preceding chapters traced the life of Romesh Dutt, recounted his achievements and described

his views on contemporary topics. They give a glimpse of his personality, but the picture needs to be completed, for a personality is more than what finds expression in public utterances or published works. We have noted what Sister Nivedita said of him after his death, "...what matters it to him, the illustrious dead, whether a book or two more or less live or die?" and also how she described him as "one who dreamt high dreams and worked at great things untiringly, yet left behind him, before his country's altar, no offering so noble, no proof of her greatness so incontrovertible as that one thing of which he never thought at all—his own character and his own love!" That indeed was Romesh Chunder's greatest contribution to his country, as it was proof of the country's great heritage, namely, "his own character and his own love."

A characteristic which is evident from the story of his life is the burning passion that he had to achieve something worth-while in his life-time, for according to him, to use the line which he used to quote :

"Life isn't a game, once lost, we play again".

This passion inspired him to hard work for which his capacity was almost unlimited. It is indeed marvellous to contemplate how in a comparatively short life span of sixty-one years, most of which was spent in discharging his administrative responsibilities, and later in his political duties, he found time to produce works of merit in such diverse spheres as historical and social fiction, Ancient History, Vedic studies, Ancient Literature, and modern Indian Economics. He nourished the desire to achieve fame as a writer and scholar, and to this end he exerted himself to the utmost but was content to leave his work as a writer and a scholar to be judged by posterity. But the desire to achieve fame either contemporaneously or after death was not his primary

object. His sensitive nature grieved at the poverty and suffering of his country, and he "dreamt high dreams," as Sister Nivedita put it, for her future. His sense of history gave him the proper perspective, for no one knew better than he did the richness and the glories of India's heritage, and the process of history by which the once proud civilisation which had led the world had entered into a period of temporary decline. His wide travels in Europe enabled him to compare the progress made in these countries since the Industrial Revolution with the state of comparative stagnation in his own land. But he lived in an age when the Indian Renaissance had already heralded a new dawn in India, and he was anxious not only to make his own contribution to this resurgence in thoughts and ideas, but also to hasten the process of economic and political changes by creating an economic and political consciousness among his own countrymen, on the one hand, and by arguing with the ruling authorities, on the other, to make the necessary changes which would at least not obstruct, if not hasten, the process of transformation. To what extent he succeeded in his endeavours and what contribution he made to the building up of a new India will be considered in the next two Chapters. It would suffice here to describe the motive force behind the tremendous effort that he put in throughout his busy life, the attitude and the frame of mind that he brought to bear on his work, and the objectives that he had in view.

A remarkable characteristic that guided him throughout his life was that of moderation and restraint. It did not arise out of weakness, but out of what he considered to be the practical realities of the situation, and out of his keen desire for orderly progress, stage by stage, in a thoroughly constitutional manner. It is possible to criticise his mode-

ration, specially in the light of subsequent developments, on the ground that it acted as a brake on political progress, but it is important to appreciate, before such criticism is accepted, that he acted during the greater part of his active life in a political context which was not ripe for a faster pace. At any rate, whether or not his moderation and restraint were entirely defensible from the political point of view, it must be conceded that they arose out of his deep conviction, and not out of any lack of courage to face the consequences of a more extreme form of political action. No better picture of Romesh Dutt's attitude to his work, and of his mental make-up, can be presented than that drawn by Poet Rabindranath in his inimitable language :

"The most striking feature of his character was that, with boundless enthusiasm, he possessed a severe classical repose, a combination rare in these days. His indomitable energy and unconquerable will drove him to his life mission of serving his country, but in no single instance did they overflow the bounds of self-restraint and dignified action. Whether in the domain of literature, or in the field of administration, or in the service of his country, all his wonderful energy was in full flow, but the bonds of self-restraint never snapped. This indeed is the sign of real strength."

In his public life and in the contribution that he made to his country, Romesh Dutt was thus inspired partly by the desire to join that galaxy of great men whom India produced in the age of her renaissance, and more by his ardent love of his country and the desire to do something to push her forward to a future as glorious as her past. He had joined the Civil Service of the then Government, and spent more than a quarter of a century in that service, but he often made it clear that official life held no special charm for him. Even in service, while adhering strictly to

the discipline of the service, he followed the dictates of his conscience, rather than the wishes of his superiors, and was always prepared to accept cheerfully the consequences of his non-conformism. He never hesitated to express his independent views, whenever he was called upon to do so, regardless of the acceptability of such views with the authorities concerned. And he never hesitated, within the bounds of the discretion allowed to his office, to exercise that discretion according to his judgment, unmindful of the unpopularity that he might incur as a result thereof with the powers that be. Whether in service or outside, he was a rebel in the sense that he did not subscribe to the accepted patterns of thought and behaviour if they conflicted with his independent judgment, but he was a constitutional rebel who would not in any case proceed beyond the limits prescribed by the laws and the accepted procedures of the time to register his protest and to advance his country's cause.

## II

In spite of his busy life and his sense of mission which kept him pre-occupied, whether in India or abroad, whether on duty or on holiday, Romesh Dutt had ample time for his family in whose company he rejoiced and relaxed. He was an excellent correspondent, and a flood of light on the softer side of his character is thrown by his letters to his daughters and grand-daughters. He was a loving father of five daughters and a son who loved to flock round him, not from a sense of duty, but for the sheer joy of it. He had been married, as has been noticed, in 1864 when he was a boy of 16, even before he passed his Entrance Examination. By the time he left for England in 1868 to compete for the Indian Civil Service the young couple had

two daughters born to them, the eldest, Kamala, in 1866 and her sister, Bimala, in 1867.

The remaining four children were born after his return from England. The third daughter, Amla, was born in 1872, and the fourth daughter, Sarala, in 1873. Their only son, Ajoy, was born in 1879, and their last child, a daughter, Sushila, in 1882. The daughters dispersed to distant places on marriage, but kept up a continuous flow of correspondence with their father. Happily, Romesh Dutt suffered no serious bereavement in his life. His wife and all his children survived him to mourn his death.

Space does not permit reproduction of Romesh Dutt's letters to his daughters, except a very few representative ones. These letters which he obviously enjoyed writing and which he wrote in profusion show how he yearned for the company of his daughters, and yet how he restrained himself because he felt, and in fact taught his daughters, that it was their duty to stand by, love and constantly aid their husbands. In his first letter after the marriage of his fourth daughter, Sarala, for instance, he wrote :

"You know how much I have loved you and all my daughters; and you are aware I have no greater or truer joy in life than to know that you are happy. That your husband's abiding love and kindness will sustain and bless you among all the cares and troubles of life, that your ministering and never-failing love for him will cheer him amidst all his duties and anxieties, are the dearest wishes of your ever-loving father. I have had more than my share of happiness in this world, more than I deserved, but my truest joy in life has been the love of my daughters and the knowledge that they are happy."

Even while sojourning in England, which he often did, he longed for his home and his family. On one of these

occasions he expressed himself in verse to one of his daughters on her birthday :

I can see the loving faces  
Gathered in my loving home,  
I can hear the sounds of laughter  
As across the seas they come!

I can feel their love's young tendrils  
Wind around an old man's heart;  
Loves of children true and tender  
Lands and oceans cannot part!

If at times my soul is weary,  
Thoughts like these come from above;  
Work is noblest human mission,  
Noblest human bliss is love !

His daughters, with their children and often with their husbands, used to visit him frequently. He enjoyed these visits and looked forward to them. In a letter to his third daughter, Amala, and her husband he wrote:

"I have had more than the usual portion of success and happiness allotted to men in his life; but, believe me, there is no happiness which I have felt more keenly than to see those who are near and dear to me, affectionate and happy and good. Their love is the best solace, and the best reward of a life of toil and endeavours."

His eagerness and impatience to see his daughters are expressed in many of his letters. The child-like enthusiasm that he always felt on hearing about a proposed visit of a daughter he continued to display even in the last days of his life. Writing from Baroda to his daughter, Sarala, just three months before his death he said :

"Your stay with me next year will make my home cheerful and bright and happy; and we shall lead an easy and



lordly life. . . . . From Baroda there are magnificent tours to be made all around. Mount Abu and Chittor and Udaipur and all Rajputana to the north; Bombay, Poona, the hilly Concan, Mahabaleswar and all the historic Mahratta country to the south. Westward you could go to delightful Kathiawar and the far-famed temple of Dwarka on the sea; and eastwards you could go to Ujjain and Indore and the matchless valley of the Narbada. It is a chance you will never get in your life-time if you miss it now, so don't miss it. Make up your mind."

Alas! the visit never materialised, for within three months of writing this letter Romesh Dutt passed away.

But his letters not merely contain evidence of his tender love for his family and occasionally his philosophy of life, but show how human he was. He could not only think and write on problems of administration, produce historical works and carry on controversies with Viceroys and Secretaries of State but with equal ease write letters full of information on everyday humdrum events of life. Indeed, as a closely knit family no event was too trivial to be communicated in letters among the members of the family. Romesh Dutt's letters to members of his immediate family abound in accounts of such day to day incidents. One reads in these letters how a pet *nilgai* was broken to a cart, what favourite dishes were served at the meals, and a hundred other homely incidents of such nature. He delighted in recounting them, and always did so with a sense of humour magnifying an ordinary event into one really enjoyable.

His attachment was, however, not restricted to his wife, children and grand-children alone. One of the deepest attachments that he had all through his life was for his elder brother, Jogesh Dutt to whom he always confided his inner-

most thoughts. The two brothers stood by each other throughout their lives, through good days and bad, rejoicing in each other's joys and sharing each other's sorrows. Romesh Dutt who was financially better off than his elder brother generously helped the latter whenever such help was necessary. In his turn, the elder brother Jogesh Dutt shared the official anxieties of Romesh Chunder, gave him advice and generally looked after his interests specially during the latter's long sojourns abroad. The correspondence between the two brothers was continuous till the last days of Romesh Chunder's life, his elder brother having survived him by about a year. The correspondence was marked not only by frankness and complete confidence in each other, but often by expressions of deep friendliness and fraternal love. Writing in September 1893, for instance, in reply to a letter of good wishes from his elder brother on his having completed forty-five years, Romesh Dutt said :

"....From you the wishes are most welcome, because you mean all you say and more than you say. For I have ever found in you a friend who has helped me when I needed help—sympathised with my aims, appreciated my endeavours and triumphed in my successes. And my labours and successes have been doubly pleasant to me because I know you appreciate them and are pleased with them. Let us work on thus, together, with mutual sympathy during the brief remainder of our lives, and we shall have thus doubled the happiness and lightened the grief which falls to the share of all mortals."

Jogesh Dutt was equally conscious of the love and help that he had always received from his younger brother. In 1907, while acknowledging financial help that he had just received from Romesh Chunder he wrote :

".....I feel very grateful to you—more grateful than

I can well express. In fact, in all the good things of life that I have enjoyed I find your helping hand, and I die deeply indebted to you."

In reply Romesh Chunder wrote :

"So far from having done much for you, the painful thought often comes to me that I have not done any duty in life to those who are near and dear to me. To you specially, who first helped me to go to Europe, I have been able to give very little help in life. . . . I often regret the want of wealth, not for its own sake, but because it would have enabled me make some people comfortable in life."

The deep regard in which Romesh Chunder held his elder brother is shown by the occasional poems that he addressed to him. During the last few years of his life, Jogesh Chunder was stricken by a touch of paralysis which confined him to his bed. In a touching poem that he composed, Romesh Dutt expressed his feelings :

"Yet if patience in our woe,  
     Trial and trouble silent borne,  
 Sanctifies this life below,  
     Saints' white garment thou hast worn :  
 Thine is sweet souled resignation,  
     And thy life,—a dedication!

Their life-long companionship he again described thoughtfully in a verse, dedicated to his brother :

"The day is done, and darkness  
     Closes round our earthly strife,  
 Side by side, in joy or sadness  
     We will stand till close of life.  
 What though lights of earthly gladness  
     Gleam not through this mist and rain,

Living souls that cheered our sadness  
Parted from this world of pain,

What though all unfriended,  
We are left in toil and care,  
And a deep gloom o'erwhelms us,  
And a tempest in the air,

Brother's love hath powers to quiet  
Toil and trouble, ceaseless care,  
And comes like the benediction  
That follows after prayer.

That love shall wake a music  
O'er the closing of our day,  
Until our life, like the Arabs,  
Silently shall steal away."

Romesh Chaunder's generosity and assistance were extended to persons well outside his immediate circle of friends and close relations. His distant relations too had the benefit of his helping hand. An instance is quoted by his biographer, J. N. Gupta, how, when he was himself facing financial stringency, he helped an uncle of his whose son was almost stranded in England for want of funds. And in rendering such assistance, he was never patronising; in fact, hardly conscious that he had done a good deed. He took such acts as normal. It was natural for a person who had the means to help those who hadn't.

He was equally generous and loyal to his friends and comrades. Among his personal friends, the most intimate was Behari Lal Gupta, who along with Surendranath Banerjea had accompanied him on his first voyage to Europe in 1868 and had successfully competed at the Indian Civil Service Examination with him. Since then

they had maintained their friendship, and it was appropriate that by his death-bed at Baroda, apart from members of his immediate family, stood his old and tried friend, Beharilal. Of him, Romesh Chunder said :

“And with me a friend true-hearted,  
Silent, from his parents parted,  
Shared with me in joy and tears,  
Stood by me these forty years !

Life is sweeter, life is dearer,  
When true friendship links us nearer,  
Heart to heart and hand to hand,  
As in youth, in age we stand !”

Surendranath Banerjea was not only a friend of his early days, but a comrade later when he entered politics. Surendranath had entered politics much earlier, and had made for himself a place of his own in the political life of India. Romesh Dutt ungrudgingly recognized this position, rejoiced in it, and addressing him said :

“But the history of India of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century will cherish the names of a band of patriotic workers, none nobler, truer, more persistent and more patriotic than yourself.”

Romesh Dutt was equally generous in recognising the merit of his younger colleagues. He knew a great leader when he saw one, and he had no hesitation in acknowledging it in public. An occasion arose when he proposed Mr. Gopal Krishna Gokhale as the President of the Indian National Congress in 1905. He referred to Gokhale's speech in the Viceroy's Council and said :

“Gentlemen, I do not know how you received that speech, but when for the first time I read that speech, I felt within myself that that was the coming man for India.

The power of eloquence, the power of debate, the great moderation and lucid statement of facts, which characterised that splendid speech in the Viceroy's Council, showed that we had at last got a champion who would do justice to his country and countrymen."

### III

Like all great men Romesh Dutt was a product of his contemporary environment, and yet ahead of it. He spent his boyhood in the early days of the second half of the nineteenth century when, as has been noticed earlier, the Indian renaissance had already gathered momentum. In many respects, Romesh Dutt was a product of this renaissance movement. The influence of Western thought with its emphasis on rationalism as well as on nationalism was evident in his thinking. While, on the one hand, therefore, he was proud of India's ancient heritage and laboured to bring this heritage to the knowledge of his contemporaries, on the other, he rejected the unreasoning prejudices which had developed in the social and religious life of the country and pleaded for social reform on a rationalistic basis. To this extent, Romesh Dutt was a product of the best influences of his time. At the same time, he blazed new trails in several fields and anticipated future trends. In the field of economics, and to a limited extent in the field of politics too, his views were well in advance of his time. His researches in Indian Economics provided the economic basis for the political movement in the twentieth century. In his emphasis on representative government too he anticipated the political movement which was to follow. Indeed, he dreamt dreams for the future, and belonged to the select group of Indians of the nineteenth century who while work-

ing for the progress of the country, were well ahead of the great mass of the people who were still steeped in superstition and orthodoxy, content with their lot and apathetic, if not hostile, to progress.

It was the lot of Romesh Dutt, as of all reformers, to be ahead of his times and, therefore, to attract criticism and opposition. This was so specially in social matters where convention was strong and orthodoxy held sway. It was, however, characteristic of Romesh Dutt to distinguish between the essential and the non-essential, and while refusing to compromise on the former to desist from senseless acts of defiance in regard to the latter. It was not for him to behave as the early students of the Hindu College did, to eat the forbidden meat and throw remnants thereof into orthodox houses merely to indicate that they were free from orthodox conventions and prejudices. On the contrary, he was prepared to conform, so long as conformism was not against his principles and convictions. He had occasion to state this attitude of his in a letter of advice to his would-be son-in-law who sought the hand of his daughter against the wishes of his father. He referred in this connection to the suggestion that his future son-in-law, who had himself just returned from England, should do penance for having travelled overseas. Romesh Dutt wrote to his prospective son-in-law:

"You are right in thinking that your father should not consent to see you degraded in the eyes of all honest men by undergoing a penance. And while you will refuse to do this, and while you claim to use your own discretion in choosing a partner for life, you should also, as you have wisely decided to do, try your best to conciliate your father, and to retain that love which should exist between father and son. Your wife should help you in doing this,



should be dutiful and respectful to her father-in-law, and should, in fact, conform to the Hindu usage in respect to her father and mother-in-law. My other daughters who have fathers-in-law do this; they appear before them veiled, never speak to them, and do obeisance by touching the feet. They conform to the Hindu usage with respect to their husbands' parents, and I like this. We need not in these small matters hurt the feelings of seniors by departing from old Hindu customs. We depart from them only where we should do so in principle. On principle, inter-caste marriage is a duty with us, because it unites the divided and enfeebled nation, and we should establish this principle (as well as widow marriage etc.) safely and securely in our little society, so that the greater Hindu society, of which we are only a portion and the advanced guard, may take heart and follow. I cannot tell you how deeply I have felt this for years past; of my two novels, *Sansar* goes in for widow marriage, and *Samaj*, of which the first few chapters have gone to *Sahitya*, goes in for inter-caste marriage."

This view of a matured reformer can hardly be improved upon. The ostentatious act of defiance of the conventional norms, however outdated, is merely a reflection of the ego of the person concerned. It does not help in modifying or removing the harmful practices. On the other hand, it tends to make attitudes more rigid, and thus retard the process of reform. A reformer who is anxious for real reform must, therefore, necessarily concentrate on the essentials.

The impact of Romesh Dutt on contemporary Indian society was thus that of a leader who in social, economic and political spheres thought well ahead not only of the masses but even of the bulk of the educated classes, and

sought to lead the latter to a more modern social, economic and political framework. He was not unique in this, and though he opened up new lines of thought and marshalled new data specially in the economic and the cultural fields by his researches and his writings, he was content to contribute to the common cause and join the select band of leaders whom the nineteenth century had thrown up in India. His impact was, therefore, not that of a rebel or even a lone pioneer who is thrown out and denied by his society. It was that of a mature reformer, necessarily ahead of time, proceeding purposefully and inspite of opposition to his appointed goal. He faced opposition, not the least of which was when he translated the *Rig Veda* into Bengali, much to the annoyance of the orthodox community who regarded it as an act of defilement by an outsider. He met such opposition, not by acts of open defiance, but quietly, often without argument, but by persistence in his course of action, until the opposition, if it did not die down altogether, lost much of its vehemence and force. By such persistence and by his own conduct he tried to carry society with him, and by and large, he succeeded. Orthodoxy had lost much of its hold on the educated classes by the time he died, and voices were few which criticised him on account of his social conduct and views.

## CHAPTER XIV

### CONTRIBUTION TO NATIONAL LIFE

The transfer of power on the 15th August, 1947, was not an isolated incident in the history of India. It was the culmination of a long process which started at the beginning of the nineteenth century, if not earlier. Transfer of power is essentially a political fact, but politics does not run its course independent of social, cultural and economic movements. A country can attain political independence only when the situation in all its aspects, internal and external, is ripe for it. Loss of independence, or political subjugation of a country by itself indicates a state of decline in the country. Without such a decline, or at least relative decline compared to the ruling country, such subjugation would hardly be possible. In order to regain independence this process of decline has to be reversed. Political independence is never a gift from one country to another. It has to be earned by the subject country.

And so it was in India. The eighteenth century which saw the emergence of European Powers in India, leading finally to the establishment of British supremacy in the second half of the century, marked the nadir of Indian history. With the exception of the Sikh movement which still flourished in the Punjab, and the Mahrattas in Western India, Indian history in the eighteenth and in the preceding century showed no spark of life. Occasionally, a valiant Indian Prince like Hyder Ali or Tipu Sultan fought courageously against the foreigners, but over the greater part of the country the people were apathetic and the local rulers hopelessly divided among themselves, and quite

unable to put up a united resistance to the rising foreign Powers. Even in the cultural field, the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries in India held no great promise. In the economic sphere, while the Industrial Revolution had transformed the face of Europe, India lagged behind, still wedded to the traditional methods of agriculture and to the manual skills in cottage and small-scale industries.

The renaissance in India began early in the nineteenth century as a result of the impact with the West. Initially, this impact with the resurgent West which had embarked on a technological age, dazzled India and swept those who came into contact with Western thought and life off their feet. Soon, however, the lessons that the West had to offer were assimilated and in various fields, social, cultural, political and economic, genuine Indian movements of regeneration commenced. The middle and the second half of the nineteenth century in particular produced a galaxy of outstanding men who acted as pioneers in diverse fields, and initiated movements which lifted the country out of the temporary morass of depression and despondency which had engulfed her in the preceding centuries. These movements continued through the first half of the twentieth century until the stage was set for the emergence of India on the 15th August, 1947, as a free and independent country.

What was Romesh Chunder's part in the great movement of regeneration of a country with a proud and ancient civilisation? He was perhaps no pioneer, but his interests were spread over a wide field and his contributions in many of these fields were massive. What was the stage of development in each such field, what were his contributions thereto and how did his work help in the future developments in that field? To answer these questions briefly,

his work needs to be assessed separately in each of the spheres in which he laboured in the various phases of his life.

## II

In his official life, Romesh Dutt was essentially an administrator. India had produced great administrators in the past, but since the rise of British Power higher administration, except in the Princely States, had been closed to the Indians. The Queen's Proclamation on the assumption of power from the East India Company had assured equality of treatment to all classes of Her Majesty's subjects without distinction of race and creed. There was, however a wide gulf between theory and practice. It was not easy, for instance, for an Indian to gain admission to the highest civil service in the country, nor, having gained admission, was it easy for an Indian to reach positions of real responsibility and trust. The fact that the competitive examination for the Indian Civil Service was held only in England was by itself a serious handicap, for few Indian students could, specially in the nineteenth century, overcome the social and economic obstacles for a journey to that country. Secondly, the examination as we have seen was loaded against Indians. It is no wonder, therefore, that before Romesh Dutt and his friends competed successfully at the Indian Civil Service examination there was only one Indian who had succeeded in joining that service.

Even after joining the Civil Service the path of an Indian was by no means easy, specially if, like Romesh Dutt, he chose to express his views fearlessly, though within the limits of official propriety, and selected as he did, the executive line and thus sought to exercise power and authority on behalf of the State. We have seen how

the myth of the unfitness of even educated and well-trained Indians to hold positions of executive responsibility was assiduously propagated at the time, and even naively believed in by some, and how the appointment of Romesh Dutt as District Magistrate caused shock and surprise to the Anglo-Indian community. It was to the credit of Romesh Dutt that he broke through this psychological barrier without sacrificing his integrity and independence. He reached the position of Divisional Commissioner, the highest so far attained by an Indian. What is more, he drew appreciation from the then Government for his administrative competence and thus paved the way for the future generations of Indian administrators to rise to positions of influence and power. This ultimately resulted in a body of well-trained Indian administrators being formed who rendered substantial service to the free Indian Government after the transfer of power. Even more important than this perhaps was the confidence which the careers of Romesh Dutt and his immediate Indian successors created among Indians, thus helping to dispel the feeling of inferiority so characteristic of a subject nation.

Romesh Dutt's subsequent administrative career in Baroda gave him an opportunity to function at a higher level of administration, and to demonstrate to his countrymen that given the opportunity Indians could discharge high administrative responsibilities as efficiently as their rulers. What is more, it gave Romesh Dutt an opportunity to demonstrate, by introducing progressive measures of reform in the state of Baroda, that administration of their own country by Indians could be more responsive to the needs and aspirations of the people, than administration by foreigners, however, efficient in a narrow sense such administration might be.

## III

Though administration was undoubtedly his major pre-occupation during his adult life, Romesh Dutt, as we have noticed, found time in his busy life to make massive contributions to several other fields. The most important such field in which he laboured, and which as we have also noticed earlier he regarded as his first love, was that of literature. He has left behind him works of lasting value in such diverse literary fields as Fiction, translation of the scriptures and the ancient Epics, Ancient History, Economic History, apart from a mass of writings on contemporary economics and politics. For a proper appreciation of his works in these various spheres it is necessary to consider them separately in relation both to the stage of development reached at the time in each such literary field as well as to the development that took place subsequently.

To take his contribution to Bengali literature first, it has to be recalled that Bengali had not reached in his time the status and the stature it did subsequently in the twentieth century with the epoch-making contribution made to it by Poet Rabindranath. Modern Bengali prose started late in the eighteenth century and early in the nineteenth with the writings of Raja Ram Mohun Roy. The subsequent years of the nineteenth century, however, saw a galaxy of outstanding literary men in Bengal both in poetry and in prose. Much of the contribution in this period was inspired by the spirit of renaissance. New styles were introduced, specially in poetry, and new thoughts boldly expressed. A bold innovator in poetry was Michael Madhusudan Dutt who for the first time introduced blank verse in Bengali poetry. His poetry was rich in imagery and showed the undoubted influence of great English poets like Milton and Byron. A contemporary literary figure, though senior to



Romesh Dutt, was Bankim Chandra Chatterjee who without question was the greatest Bengali novelist of the nineteenth century. His famous novel *Anand Math* woven round the story of a *Sanyasi* revolt, and his immortal song *Bande Mataram* inspired the succeeding generations of freedom fighters and in fact became the symbol of political resurgence in the twentieth century. Romesh Chunder's first homage to Bengali literature was his work in English, *Literature of Bengal*, published in 1877. This was the first scientific attempt to write a history of Bengali literature from the twelfth century down to his time. It was a surprise to the foreigners, and indeed to many Indians, that Bengali literature had a history which dated back to the twelfth century. He divided the history in three clear cut periods---the lyricism of Jaydeva, Vidyapati and Chandidas, the classical period represented by the great Chaitanya, Kritibas and Kasiramdas, and the modern period initiated by Raja Ram Mohun Roy and followed by a galaxy of talented writers. It was this last group that Romesh Dutt sought to join by his contribution to Bengali fictional literature with four historical fictions and two social novels. *Banga-Bijeta* (or the Conqueror of Bengal) and *Madhabi Kankan* (or bracelet of flowers) depicted the story of Akbar's conquest of Bengal, while the other two, namely, *Maharashtra Jiban Probhat* and *Rajput Jiban Sandhya*, as their names indicate related to the rise of Maharatta power and the decline of Rajput power. Romesh Dutt's object in writing these historical novels was not merely to enrich Bengali literature, but to hold before his countrymen the picture of chivalry, courage and greatness of men and women of bygone generations of Indians. His two social novels *Samaj* and *Sansar* were also written with a purpose. One advocated widow re-marriage and the other inter-caste marriage.

Romesh Dutt may not have attained the heights of Bankim Chunder, his predecessor, or Sarat Chandra Chatterjee, his successor in the twentieth century as a novelist. Nevertheless, his contribution to Bengali literature at a formative stage of the language was substantial and helped the process of development of Bengali to reach the stage when outstanding masters like Rabindranath, Sarat Chandra and a number of other less widely known but notable men of literary genius could by their contributions raise Bengali literature to world rank.

Another outstanding contribution that Romesh Dutt made to Bengali literature was his translation of the *Rig Veda*. This work, which was completed in 1885, however, falls within a different sphere of his literary activity. Along with his works in English on the translation of the Epics, his *Lays of Ancient India* and in fact with his historical work *History of Civilisation of Ancient India*, the translation of the *Rig Veda* into Bengali was the result of his erudition and his researches in India's antiquity, and represented his attempt to bring to the present generations of Indians the glories of their ancient, historical heritage. Romesh Dutt was no blind believer in antiquity; he was no revivalist; and yet he had the historian's sense of continuity, and he believed that the present has its roots in the past. In his social life he had broken with numerous dogmas and traditions which had grown round Hindu religion and Hindu social life during the middle ages, and yet true to the spirit of Indian renaissance he sought inspiration for his non-conformist views partly from the dictates of reason and partly from the thoughts, beliefs and practices of ancient India which were themselves born out of reason and undiluted by later accretions. Romesh Dutt did not preach unquestioned adherence to the past, even

to the ancient past, however glorious it might have been. He was fully aware that the process of human thought was a developing one and a country, as an individual, could ignore such development only at her cost. At the same time, the civilisation or culture of a people is not something extraneous which could be imposed on the people from outside. It has to be suited to the genius of the people, which in its turn is conditioned by history and tradition. Unquestioned acceptance of dogmas regardless of their suitability to the traditions of a people, their attitudes and beliefs, merely on account of their recent origin is, therefore, equally unwise. A knowledge of the ancient heritage of a country is thus essential for the formulation of rational attitudes towards future developments. It is all the more important in a country like India which can boast of a glorious civilisation in the past when men had reached heights of thought and culture unequalled in that age. A rational pride in this ancient heritage and a true understanding of the basis of culture which consciously or sub-consciously influences the thinking of our people even today are essential to give to the people a true perspective on future development. It was with this object in view that Romesh Dutt laboured to place the treasures of India's past heritage before the Indian people. By doing so, he gave the Indian people a new dignity, a confidence in themselves, and a balanced outlook for the future.

While, however, he translated the *Rig Veda* into Bengali, he translated the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* into English verse in 1898 and 1899. Earlier, in 1894, he had published his *Lays of Ancient India*, also in English verse. This was a translation of some of the best known passages from the *Upanishads*, from the Edicts of Asoka and from the short epic *Bhairavi*. His most substantial

contribution to the historical studies of Ancient India was however, his *History of Civilisation in Ancient India*, which he wrote during 1889-90. Though, as he himself pointed, this book did not profess "to make any new discoveries, or to extend in any way the limits of oriental scholarship and research," it did place before the inquisitive student of Indian culture in a handy form much that was until then known only to scholars and orientalists about the culture and civilisation of ancient India.

In composing these works in English, Romesh Dutt had a larger audience in mind than that of his countrymen. The Western scholars had indeed evinced great interest in Indian antiquity, and Orientalists like Prof. Max Muller had done considerable work in unfolding even before the modern generations of Indians the glories of their past heritage. This knowledge of India was, however, confined to a handful of scholars and men of learning. To the great masses of the people of the world, particularly those of the West, India was a land of quixotic people, quaint customs, deep ignorance and all round backwardness. That India had developed a civilisation when most other parts of the world were still backward, that she had produced works in various branches of human knowledge of lasting value, that she had a history not less proud than that of any of the more developed countries, and that she had entered into a temporary period of decline but already showed signs of renaissance, were facts not known to the Western world. In the absence of a true knowledge of India, her relations with the West, specially those with England, were vitiated. It was, therefore, Romesh Dutt's ambition to dispel this ignorance, present a true picture of India, and win for her a rightful place in the world. To the extent that it is possible for any single individual solely through literary efforts

to do so, he largely succeeded in his objective. His effort to resuscitate the glory of ancient India had not only a profound effect on his resurgent compatriots, but certainly helped in creating a better understanding of India and her cultural values abroad.

#### IV

The later years of Romesh Chunder's life, specially the period after his retirement from the Indian Civil Service, found him engaged in economic and political work. Early in his official career, in the year 1875, he had published his book on *Bengal Peasantry*. The book had aroused interest at the time, for he had espoused the cause of the peasants both against Government and against the landlords. He had advocated a sort of Permanent Settlement between the landlords and the peasants which would define the rights and liabilities of the latter in perpetuity. Later, in his official life, he had in his comments and reports to Government strongly supported a progressive Tenancy Act, had complained against excessive land-assessment and had opposed Government's right of pre-emption on land. It was not, however, till his retirement from service that he turned seriously to economics as a subject of study and research. During the seven years from 1897 when he retired from service to 1904 when he joined the Baroda Administration, Romesh Dutt made his massive contribution to the study of Indian Economics. His first work, *England and India*, was published in 1897, his second, *Famines in India*, which included his five open letters to Lord Curzon, in 1900, and his classical work, *The Economic History of India*, in two volumes in 1902 and 1904 respectively.

These three works along with his speeches, and his articles contributed to various journals from time to time, portray clearly Romesh Dutt's thinking on the economic problems of India, and his contribution to the development of such thought in India in the subsequent period. The main theses developed by him in these works have already been noticed. It is worthwhile to reiterate, however, that his main contribution to the thinking on Indian Economics lay in the fact that he approached the problems from the Indian point of view, which in fact is the only relevant point of view, and not from that of the rulers. The economic writings on India hitherto available were from the latter point of view which claimed that India had prospered under British rule. As evidence thereof it was pointed out that the country had been opened up with the help of the Railways, that peace had been established throughout the country and that India's growing prosperity was reflected in the growing volume for her foreign trade. Romesh Dutt assailed all these comfortable hypotheses. He conceded that India enjoyed peace under British rule, and that the Railways had opened up large parts of the country, but pointed out that this had been done with British capital which had been guaranteed a good rate of return. He contended that there was a tendency to extend the Railways beyond the economic needs of India to provide employment for British capital. His main point of attack, however, was that India, unlike any other civilised country in the world, was subject to recurring famines. This, he pointed out, was due to extortionate land assessment which left the peasant resourceless even in normal times, and quite unable to meet a situation of scarcity arising out of drought or flood. He complained bitterly against Government expenditure, specially expenditure designed to support Britain's aggressive



foreign policy on India's frontiers, and even to maintain the British Army in South Africa.

Of even greater lasting value was Romesh Dutt's analysis of the economic administration of India from the beginning of the East India Company's rule. In his two volumes of *Economic History* he traced the decline of Indian industries during the early British rule under a deliberate policy to discourage such industries, so that India might offer no competition to British products. He pointed out that it was the sole concern of the then rulers in the economic field to develop India as a source of supply of raw materials for British Industries. With the coming in of steam power in Britain, this policy could be pursued with ease, and even with a measure of respectability. Free Trade was widely accepted in nineteenth century Britain as a wholesome principle of International Commerce. In the name of free trade, regardless of its suitability to Indian conditions, the nineteenth century British rulers of India threw open the manual industries of this country to unfair competition with the steam driven industries of England. The volume of trade with England had no doubt increased, but, as Romesh Dutt pointed out, taking into account the nature of this trade, the fact of such increase did not reflect the growing prosperity of India.

Another valuable result of Romesh Dutt's analysis was to focus attention on the annual drain from India in the form of what was called "Home Charges." He pointed out in his *Economic History* that while the land revenue of India was 17½ millions in 1900-01, the Home Charges amounted the same year to 17 millions. This meant, he rightly concluded, that "an amount equivalent to all that is raised from the soil, in all the Provinces of India, is annually remitted out of the country as Home Charges. An



additional sum of several millions is sent in the form of private remittances by European Officers, drawing their salaries from Indian Revenues; and this remittance increases as the employment of European Officers increases in India."

Romesh Dutt also drew attention to the Public Debt of India. "When the East India Company ceased to be rulers of India in 1858, they had piled up an Indian Debt of 70 millions", Romesh Dutt stated. "They had in the meantime drawn a tribute from India, financially an unjust tribute, exceeding 150 millions, not calculating interest. They had also charged India with the cost of Afghan wars, Chinese wars, and other wars outside India. Equitably, therefore, India owed nothing at the close of the Company's rule; her Public Debt was a myth; there was a considerable balance of over 100 millions in her favour out of the money that had been drawn from her." He went on to point out how the 70 million Public Debt in 1858 doubled to 140 millions by 1877, and how by 1900 it had risen to 224 millions. "The history of the Indian Debt," he concluded, "is a distressing record of financial unwisdom and injustice, and every impartial reader can reckon for himself how much of this Indian Debt is morally due from India."

This was a powerful indictment, the facts of which had hitherto been concealed from the Indian public in a maze of arguments about the alleged "growing prosperity" of India under British rule. It was Romesh Dutt's contribution to the resurgence of India that he placed before his countrymen a true picture of the economics of British administration in India. From the over-assessment of the Indian peasantry to the ruin of her industries, the drain of public wealth from India and the mounting Public Debts incurred not in her interest but to finance wars abroad, Romesh Dutt painted a picture which contributed substantially to an

awakening in India to the true nature of the foreign connection. It made the people realise, as he himself concluded, that the economic laws operated with the same force in India as they did elsewhere. Given the economic policies pursued by the rulers, it was no wonder that India was a land of recurring famines and of diminishing plenty.

Romesh Dutt was not a theoretical economist, and he sought to make no contribution to economic theory. He was interested in Indian Economics, and even in this field he confined himself to an analysis of the current economic phenomena. He analysed brilliantly the economics of British administration, and the reasons for India's poverty. His contribution in this field was substantial and massive. This contribution was not only to the field of Indian Economics, but as Prof. Gadgil has pointed out, to what has subsequently come to be known as the Economics of Colonialism, for the economic basis of colonialism, wherever it may occur, is fundamentally the same. Romesh Dutt did not, however, develop a blue print for the economic development or reconstruction of India. The time had not come for this; and the period in which he lived and worked was one predominantly of *laissez-faire* in the economic field. The age of planning and socialism was yet to come. What he pleaded for was economic justice. He wanted reasonable assessment on land, encouragement of Indian industries and a review of the tariff system for the purpose, economy in Government expenditure, and specially avoidance of all expenditure not relevant to India's needs and interests, and finally a readjustment of the financial relationship between England and India. Judged in the context in which he made his contribution to this field, namely, at a stage when Colonialism was at its height, the contribution must be regarded as both

bold and substantial. Indeed, much of the credit for the fact that in later years Colonialism and imperialism fell into disrepute, not only in India but all the world over, goes to men like Romesh Dutt who by their detailed analyses of colonial regimes revealed to the colonial peoples the true nature of such connections.

## V

Economic in the modern world is the hand-maid of politics, and whether or not one agrees with Karl Marx that economics provides the main, if not the sole, motivation of history, there is no doubt that it is an important factor which shapes and is in turn shaped by the course of politics. It is no wonder, therefore, that Romesh Dutt who was deeply interested in the economic history of India and in the economic administration in general of the British regime in India was not apathetic to politics. In fact, it was his economics which led him into politics and not *vice-versa*. In the context of the second half of the nineteenth century when British rule was accepted as a fact, he did not rebel against this rule as a wrong by itself. On the contrary, he described the British Empire as a superb institution. He was, however, acutely conscious of the economic injustice which British rule had perpetrated on India, and he attributed this injustice to the lack of representative institutions in the Indian administration, which could influence the decisions of Government. He, therefore, pleaded and worked for the development of representative institutions at all levels of administration so that the Indian point of view could be brought to bear on the vital decisions affecting the country.

Romesh Chunder's interest in active politics started after his retirement from the Indian Civil Service. Even be-

fore his retirement, however, he had in his reports to Government taken every opportunity to express himself in favour of representative institutions. He was, as an Administration Report of the Government of Bengal stated, "a hearty supporter of local self-government." He pleaded for the constitution of Panchayats in groups of villages to whom simple tasks of general administration as also of administration of justice could be assigned. He also proposed establishment of District Boards with non-official Chairmen. He was opposed to the autocratic powers exercised in the Districts by District officers, and pointed out how a District officer combined in himself the roles of a prosecutor and a Judge in the same case. He was in favour of separation of Judicial and Executive powers; but his main contention was that District administration, however well-intentioned and in fact beneficial, could never hope to enlist the support and sympathies of the people, unless it deliberately associated the people in the tasks of administration.

On his retirement from service in 1897, Romesh Dutt moved to the higher levels of Provincial and National politics. These were the closing years of the nineteenth century when radicalism, or what was then known as "extremism", was in the air. The Partition of Bengal which gave rise to a mass movement in protest was yet to come, but the younger sections in the Congress were beginning to assert themselves. They were fired by a spirit of nationalism, a feeling of impatience at India in bondage and a desire to free her at any cost. Outstanding among the "extremist" leaders were Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai, Bepin Chandra Pal and Shri Aurobindo. They were impatient specially with the methods of "petition, prayer and protest" followed by the elder leaders of the Congress, and wanted to force the pace of the national

movement. Romesh Dutt did not belong to this group. He was among the leaders then known as "Moderates" who still believed that the British connection was basically good, and that the future of India lay in advancing within the framework of the British Empire to a position of self-government as attained by the erstwhile White Colonies of Britain, like Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Romesh Dutt believed in self-government for India, but envisaged the attainment of self-government by stages with the co-operation of the British Government. He did not believe in or advocate a break with the Government, but was of the view that sufficient pressure could be brought to bear on the Government by presenting the true facts to the British public and by creating public opinion in India which the ruling power could not afford to ignore.

Before any attempt is made to assess Romesh Dutt's contribution to Indian politics it is necessary to understand the basic attitude and views which inspired him and determined his course of action, and to take into account the context in which these attitudes and views were formulated. About his sensitiveness to the dependent status of his country there could be no doubt. Long before he entered politics, while recording his impressions while standing on the top of North Cape in July, 1886, he wrote :

"I will not conceal the pain and humiliation which I felt in my inmost soul, as I stood on that memorable night among representatives of the free and advancing nations of the earth rejoicing in their national greatness. Champagne was drunk on the top of the hill, and Germans and Frenchmen, Englishmen and Americans, pressed us to share their hospitality. I accepted this offer with thanks on my lips, but I felt within me that I had no place beside them. May we,

in the course of years, progress in civilisation and in self-government, in mercantile enterprises and in representative institutions, even as the young English Colonies in Australia are doing year by year. And may our sons' sons when they come to Europe feel that India can take her place among the great advancing countries of the earth....."

About the blessings of self-government too, Romesh Dutt had no doubts. We have seen in an earlier chapter how in his Preface to the second volume of the *Economic History* he quoted with approval John Stuart Mill who had said, "Such a thing as government of one people by another does not and cannot exist. One people can keep another for its own use, a place to make money in, a human cattle-farm for the profits of its own inhabitants."

He was also conscious of the fact that pressure had to be brought to bear on the rulers to make them concede the demands of the Indian people. Referring to the criticism that by his "agitation" and his criticism of Government policy, Romesh Dutt was embarrassing Indians in the service of Government, as also those who looked to Government for favour, he wrote to his friend Beharilal Gupta :

"I know the India Office. Considerations of race are paramount there; they want to shut us out, not because we are critics, but because we are natives, and their policy is rule by Englishmen. They have matured this policy in twenty years—they have a vast mass of secret minutes in their archives on the subject. Licking the dust off their feet will not move them from this policy; unsparing criticism and persistent fighting can, and will do it. Englishmen understand fighting, and they will yield to persistent fighting—not to begging."



He had thus no illusions either about the nature of the foreign rule, or about the need for "unsparing criticism and persistent fighting." His criticism, specially in the economic field, was certainly unsparing, and could hardly be improved upon by the succeeding generations of freedom fighters. In fact, he provided the basic materials for his successors in the freedom movement to draw upon. As regards persistent fighting, however, his method was two-fold. He spent his time after retirement between England and India. In India he sought to build up public opinion in favour of representative institutions and on economic problems; and in England he endeavoured to educate the British public on the true facts of the Indian situation. It was his belief that the "mistaken policies" of the Government arose out of the fact that the Indian points of view were not pressed on the Government with sufficient authority with the result that Government remained unaware of Indian public opinion. At the same time, he had faith in British democracy and he believed that if the true facts about India were brought to the notice of the British public, the progressive sections among the British electorate would assert themselves in favour of a progressive policy in India. As he had stated in his work *England and India*, he believed that the destiny of India was linked with that of Britain, and that periods of liberalism in India alternated with those of reaction according as reactionary or progressive forces were predominant in British politics at home. It was, therefore, his endeavour, while in England, to strengthen the liberal forces in that country by acquainting the British public with the facts of Indian administration and Indian life.

Romesh Dutt belonged essentially to the second half of the nineteenth century India, and his views and attitudes



were naturally shaped by the conditions prevailing in the country in that period. During the second half of that century, with the suppression of the uprising of 1857, the spirit of revolt against foreign rule had been completely crushed. The impact with the West had certainly given rise to a spirit of renaissance, but initially this was largely confined to social, religious and cultural fields. Political consciousness, if that term is used to denote impatience with foreign rule, did not manifest itself till the closing years of the century. In the meantime, it was not foreign rule itself that was the target of criticism, but certain manifestations thereof. The Grand Old Man of Indian politics, Dadhabhai Naoroji, was perhaps the earliest outstanding Indian interested in politics. He was followed by a number of other outstanding men of the period like Surendranath Banerjea, W. C. Bonnerjea, Justice Ranade and the youngest among them, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, whom Gandhiji once called his political *guru*. These leaders, of whom Romesh Dutt was one, were interested in "reforming" the existing Government, in pointing out the mistakes and even the injustices of which the Government were guilty, and in suggesting measures, including institutional changes, which in their opinion were necessary to ensure that such mistakes and injustices did not perpetuate themselves. They did so with considerable earnestness and success, and thus laid the foundation for the new generation of leaders who carried the movement to the next logical stage, namely, the stage of revolt against foreign rule. The fact that the earlier generation of leaders did not share the outlook of the succeeding generation, and even seemed to be bitterly opposed to the later, both in their objectives and in their methods, does not indicate that there was an essential conflict between the two. The younger leaders were the logical successors to

elders who benefited by the work done by the latter. As, for instance, the grave economic injustice so clearly and brilliantly portrayed by Romesh Dutt that formed the intellectual basis for the essentially anti-colonial attitude of the later generation of leaders, and provided theoretical justification for their impatience to overthrow the foreign rule.

The contribution of Romesh Dutt to the political development of India has thus to be viewed not so much on the basis of the differences between his political outlook and that of his twentieth century successors, but in the light of the work that he did, along with the men of his generation, which made it possible for the later leaders to take the logical step forward to push the freedom movement into its final phase, resulting in the transfer of power in August, 1947. Viewed in this positive light, Romesh Dutt's contribution, though perhaps not entirely pioneering in nature, was a substantial one which gives him a place of honour among the nineteenth century political leaders of India.

## CHAPTER XV

### A BUILDER OF MODERN INDIA

For India, the nineteenth century was a century of preparation and construction. In a general way this is true of any period in any country which has not ceased to progress, for the work done during a given period helps build the country further in the succeeding period. For India, however, the nineteenth century had a special significance, for it was the century of renaissance, the nature of which determined the course of subsequent history of the country. It was a century in India when the scope for building and construction was almost limitless. The country had a proud civilisation in the past when its culture in various fields, philosophy, literature and even political and social organisation had reached its zenith. From this proud position in ancient times the country had passed, through the vicissitudes of the Middle Ages with periods of prosperity alternating with those of adversity, to the period of political disintegration and cultural decline in the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries. By the middle of the eighteenth century, with the establishment of British Power in India, the decline of Indian culture was almost complete. In localised areas the sparks of ancient genius were indeed in evidence, but in the field of culture as in those of social and political organisation the country had entered into a period of decline. With the Battle of Plassey fought in 1757, the predominance of the British Power in India was assured. Thereafter, the pockets of resistance were overcome one after another, until the whole country lay at the feet of the

... factors. The old feudal-monarchical system which had prevailed in India for centuries thus collapsed and gave place to colonialism. This was undoubtedly a reactionary event, but in the conditions which then prevailed in India and abroad, it was inevitable. The reaction was indeed deep and complete, for after the rebellion of 1857 and until signs of political resurgence became evident in the closing years of the nineteenth century, even the desire for political independence had practically vanished. History does not always move forward according to a recognised pattern of evolution. It sometimes takes a step backward before it moves forward. And so it was in India. India in the eighteenth century lapsed into colonialism, but colonialism by its very nature set in motion forces for its own liquidation. It opened out for India, hitherto isolated from the West, a window on the then fast developing modern world. This window not only exposed India to new influences of thought and culture, but showed her the deep growing gulf that separated her from the advancing West. It thus gave rise in India to the realisation of her backwardness, and created the desire to catch up with the West.

The gulf between India and the countries of Western Europe was indeed broad and a growing one in the eighteenth and even the nineteenth century, for while India faced a decline, the West witnessed a notable advance during the period. The European Renaissance which marked the end of the Medieval Age had begun earlier, but the momentum of renaissance thinking, introducing as it did the Age of Reason, continued through the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. The period of French Illumination contributed substantially to this movement in the eighteenth century, and the French Revolution of 1789 swept away the

older forms and institutions and gave birth to a new political era in Europe. More important from the economic point of view was the Industrial Revolution in Europe in the eighteenth century. The age of technology had dawned on Europe, and with it came an age of economic prosperity. The prosperity indeed took long years to reach down to the poorer strata of society, and even in the nineteenth century the condition of labour in England, for instance, was appalling. It was, in fact, not until social conscience was stirred by these conditions, and socialist movements had gained momentum that the benefits of the industrial revolution were shared by the poorer classes of society. Nevertheless, the Industrial Revolution laid the basis for economic prosperity in the West, and widened the gulf between the western countries and the countries in the East like India which continued, in the absence of any comparable technological advancement, to rely on the old conventional methods of agricultural and industrial production. It was not difficult in the circumstances for Western Powers with comparatively advanced technology at their command to subjugate politically the countries in the East, and later to press home the political advantage to crush in unfair competition, as Romesh Dutt pointed out, the manual industries of the conquered countries.

In Europe, the nineteenth century, among other concepts gave rise to the concept of nationalism. The concept was new and as later developments showed, it could indeed lead to excesses, as it, in fact, sometimes did. Instances of such excess are found in the first half of the twentieth century with the development of Fascism in Europe. The first World War arose out of the national ambition of Germany. The crushing defeat of that country followed by a Treaty dictated by the victors only encouraged the forces

of the reason and led to the growth of Fascism in the thirties of the present century. The excesses of Hitlerite Fascism caused widespread misery and suffering, and it needed a second World War, more bitterly fought than the first, to restore sanity to the world. Nationalism is certainly not the last word in political thinking, and with a world shrinking on account of technological advances, nationalism has no absolute significance today. Technological developments cannot make undiluted nationalism, or national chauvinism, as it is now called, dangerous to the existence of mankind. Nevertheless, it was a concept of value, and it helped in the nineteenth, and even in the twentieth century, to redress injustices perpetrated by one nation on another and to create a feeling of confidence and self-respect among politically under-developed nations. This was another concept which India in the eighteenth century had yet to imbibe. Unmindful of the glories of her ancient civilisation and uninspired by visions of her future, unaware of the new currents of thought in the West and untouched by the new technological developments, India in the eighteenth century had become a mere geographical entity content to entrust her destiny to any authority strong enough to ensure peace in the land.

## II

The task of building a modern India was thus a two-fold one. It involved, on the one hand, the task of reawakening the country to the glories of her past achievements, of restoring the self-respect and self-confidence of the people and of reviving interest in fruitful intellectual pursuits which characterised our forefathers in ages past. On the other

hand, it was equally necessary to catch up with the advancing nations of the West, to acquire the new techniques of thought, of organisation and of material advancement which had made such phenomenal progress in the Western countries possible. A country, specially an ancient country like India, cannot progress without a deep appreciation of its ancient culture. The behaviour and attitudes of the people of an ancient country like India are necessarily shaped, consciously or sub-consciously, by age-old traditions and culture. No movement, however progressive, which does not take account of such attitudes and norms has a chance of success. At the same time, no country can live entirely in its past, and also prosper in a fast moving world. Revivalism, to the extent that it seeks to shut out the present and go back entirely to past ways of life, is reactionary in character and harmful in its effect.

It is in the context of this task of building a modern India with her roots in the past, but her outlook and her techniques tuned to the present and the future, that the contribution of an outstanding personage like Romesh Dutt should be judged. The Indian Renaissance had commenced from the beginning of the nineteenth century, and its direction was clear. The impact of the West, specially during a period when the emphasis was on Reason, had given rise to social movements against out-dated customs and practices and unreasoning prejudices which tended to inhibit the healthy growth of society. In literature, there was almost an outburst of new thoughts and modes of expression. Political consciousness came later, but even in this field a distinct movement was discernible in the second half of the nineteenth century. Romesh Dutt's contribution to the renaissance movement was many sided, but in his diverse activities there was a common pattern, a common purpose.



This purpose was in tune with the renaissance movement and in the same direction.

A striking feature of Romesh Dutt's contribution was the balance between the old and the new. He made a massive contribution to bring the treasures of the ancient heritage within the grasp of the people of his and of future generations. His translation of *Rig Veda* into Bengali, his English verses in the *Lays of Ancient India* and his translation into English of the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*, apart from his *History of Ancient Civilisation of India* are substantial contributions in this field. By any standards, these works of purposeful scholarship would have assured him a place of honour among the builders of Modern India, for they contributed to an important aspect of the task of building Modern India by reawakening the country to the glories of her past.

Romesh Dutt's interest in ancient Indian Civilisation and his efforts to present the fruits thereof to his countrymen at home and to the world outside were, however, but one aspect of his life-long contribution. Another substantial contribution that he made to an allied field of cultural renaissance was to Bengali literature which at that stage was passing through a phase of revolutionary innovation both in form and in content. His four historical and two social novels enriched Bengali fiction literature and would probably have made a greater mark on contemporary society and attained a higher place in the history of modern Bengali literature if it had not been for the more outstanding contribution made during the same period by the nineteenth century genius of Bengali fiction, Bankim Chunder Chatterjee. In undertaking these works of fiction, however, Romesh Dutt's object was not merely to enrich his mother-tongue. His historical novel had the same object that his researches

in Indian antiquity had, namely, to present before his countrymen a picture of the chivalry, the heroism and generally the heights of human value reached by the men and women of the country in the Middle Ages. In this sense, these historical novels represented an attempt to picture the Middle Ages in India for contemporary society as his works on antiquity represented an effort to portray the Ancient period. His two social novels, on the other hand, had a different objective. They represent the author as a social reformer who advocated widow remarriage and inter-caste marriage.

In the field of social reform, except for his two novels, *Sansar* and *Samaj*, Romesh Dutt made no active contribution. The life that he lived, and occasionally the speeches that he delivered, however, not only bore testimony to the views that he held in this field, but what is more important, influenced contemporary thought on the subject. In his life, he tried to blend the best of Indian culture with the lessons which the West had to teach. As Sister Nivedita had said of him, "the expression might be modern, but the greatness within was the ancient greatness." Few in the country had greater regard than he had for the values of Indian culture, not only in the ancient age but also in the subsequent periods, but he would not allow this regard for India's history and culture to lead him to a blind acceptance of all the forms and practices which had developed in the country. He would not compromise with the unreasoning prejudices, or give in to harmful social practices when he was convinced that they were unreasonable and harmful. His first act of defiance to such a prejudice was to go abroad in spite of the counsels of his orthodox friends and relations to the contrary. He never regretted this, and on his return he advised young Indians to go out in larger numbers to broaden their outlook. In his social life, on his return, he was never

completely accepted by orthodox society, but this did not make any difference to his conduct. On the other hand, as has been noticed, he was opposed to senseless acts of defiance merely to demonstrate his freedom from prejudices. He was prepared to conform to social customs provided he did not consider them harmful.

The greatest contribution of Romesh Dutt to the building of a new India was in the field of economic administration. Though he was a student essentially of history, deeply interested in literature and philosophy, he turned his attention early in his career to the economic problems of his country. Indeed, the first book that he ever wrote, apart from his travel account published as *Three Years in Europe*, was *Bengal Peasantry*. The *Bengal Peasantry* published in 1875, the fourth year of his official career, was remarkable for the interest it evinced in the peasantry. The book not only offended the British Administration for the criticism it contained of their revenue administration, but was looked upon with equal disfavour by vested interests among the Indians. We have noticed how the Calcutta Journal *Hindoo Patriot*, for instance, ridiculed his "radicalism" and his "new fangled ideas". Romesh Dutt's interest in the peasants was, however, sustained throughout his life. Reference has also been made in the earlier chapters to Romesh Dutt's role in promoting progressive Tenancy legislation in Bengal and to his correspondence on this subject with the then Revenue Secretary of the Provincial Government. Even in his later official life his reports complained of the lack of adequate protection to the peasants and the tenants in respect of their homestead lands which drew a grudging reference to this evil from the Government's Administration Report. After his retirement from service he was free to express his views more frankly and openly, and it was natu-

ral that a great deal of his writing on the economic administration of India centred round land assessment and the intolerable burden that it imposed on the Indian peasants. The thesis that he steadily developed in his economic writings was that the recurring famines that visited India and were a disgrace to any civilised administration were basically due neither to weather failures nor to the improvident habits of the Indian peasants, as was made out by the then rulers, but really to the heavy burden of land tax which left them resourceless even in good years and quite unable to meet scarcity conditions when harvests failed. The most detailed exposition of the calamitous deficiencies of the Land Revenue System was contained in his five famous Open Letters to Lord Curzon. In these letters he examined the revenue system that prevailed in the different Provinces of India and showed how in most of them, apart from the areas where Permanent Settlements prevailed, the Government of the day in their desire to augment their revenue revised rates of assessment without adequate reason. He pleaded for longer periods of assessment during which there should be no revision, and for adoption of the principle that assessments should not be increased except where prices had risen correspondingly. Lord Curzon's Government not only denied the charge of over-assessment, as was indeed to be expected, but was less than fair to him in suggesting that while he criticised Government for extortionate land assessment, he was blind to the extortions of the Zamindars in the permanently settled areas. This was unfair, as Romesh Dutt promptly pointed out, because he had all his life pleaded for tenancy legislations to protect the tenants from extortions and other irregular practices of landlords and intermediaries of all types.

These views found a prominent place also in his *Eco-*

*conomic History of India* and were repeated on numerous occasions in his speeches. Indeed, there was no other single problem of economic administration on which he concentrated so much attention as on that of land assessment. It was his basic contention that the peasantry of the country must be built up to withstand temporary economic vicissitudes arising out of floods and droughts. They should be assured the fruits of their labour and enterprise so that they might have sufficient incentive to toil and produce more. This solicitude for the peasants which Romesh Dutt displayed all his life was a remarkable feature of his thinking and his activities, not paralleled in his time. Indeed, it was not until Mahatma Gandhi gave a fresh orientation to the national movement with his emphasis on the villages and on the backward sections of the community that the peasants received as much attention from the national leadership as they did from Romesh Dutt. In the nineteenth century the political movement had yet to acquire a mass character. It was at that time a movement largely confined to the educated classes and restricted to urban areas. It was natural, therefore, that the movement reflected the point of view and the interests of the middle classes. It is remarkable that in this context Romesh Dutt sponsored the cause, not of the landowners, but of the peasants, that he was interested in protecting their rights and in reducing their economic burden. In adopting this attitude he anticipated the future development of the national movement, and truly helped build a new India on her natural foundation, namely, that of the peasantry of the country.

Romesh Dutt's views on various other aspects of economic administration of the British Government have already been noticed. He pointed out how the Indian industries had systematically been stifled by unfair competition with the

steam power of the West and how the character of the Indian economy had deliberately been changed from one of a producer to that of a supplier of raw materials for the British industries. He further pointed out that apart from this change the British administration did not take adequate steps even to encourage Indian agriculture. On the contrary, it continued to levy extortionate rates of land tax which impoverished the agriculturists in order to sustain a high level of Government expenditure, not all in the interest of India. Expensive wars beyond the borders of India, he pointed out, had been financed out of Indian revenues in pursuance of British imperialistic policies. British capital had been employed in India on guaranteed rates of interest. The "Home charges," as they were then called, which represented a regular flow of resources from India to Britain, he characterised as a tribute imposed by the ruling country on a dependency. It was a continued drain which could not but impoverish India. Given these economic policies, it was no wonder, he concluded, that the economic condition of India continued to deteriorate, and the country was visited by recurring famines.

These criticisms did not substantially influence the policies of the then Colonial Government. Some of the grosser forms of exploitation may have been avoided, but it would have been surprising if the criticisms had led to a more equitable economic relationship between the Colonial Power and its dependency. Colonialism would have lost its *raison-d'être* if the various forms of exploitation pointed out by Romesh Dutt had been abandoned. The significance of the work that he did in this respect and the views that he expressed lay, therefore, not in influencing current administration but in creating a consciousness among his countrymen of the true economic implications of colonialism. It



was this consciousness, among other factors, with contributed to the tempo of the national movement and helped build a free India in 1947.

Another factor in Romesh Dutt's economic thought which deserves a prominent mention was his view that growth of modern industries is essential for the economic prosperity of India. His experience in administration had brought him closely in touch with the agriculturists and their problems. His researches had revealed to him the financial relationship between Britain and India. It was natural, therefore, that these matters largely engaged his thought. His economic vision, however, indicated that the country could not prosper by agriculture alone. His address\* to the first Industrial Conference outlined his thinking on the subject. In this address he stated clearly the difficulties which faced India in this field. The country had lost ground and had to catch up with the more advanced nations of the world. This by itself required special effort, but the conditions were not propitious for such an effort. The Government would not encourage industrialisation of the country for that would be inconsistent with the colonial concept of government. In fact, positive acts of discouragement would have to be faced. Nevertheless, he urged, despondency would not solve the problem. Indians must make a supreme effort, he counselled, to develop modern industries in the country. Here again, Romesh Dutt to a large extent anticipated future thinking on the subject. It is commonplace today, but was not so obvious then, that agriculture, however important, cannot without the aid of and supplemented by industries, raise a country to the level reached by the advanced countries of the world. If, therefore, India was not to remain

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\*See Appendix IV.



stagnant at an inferior economic level, she must develop her industries, not by neglecting agriculture, but in order to aid and supplement it.

Finally, another important aspect of his work of which notice must be taken is that relating to Politics. He held views from early in his career about the benefits of representative institutions and the need to introduce such institutions, gradually and with due safeguards, in India. He did not, however, naturally take any active part in politics until he retired from service. After his retirement, he was free to do so, and he did enter politics. As has been noticed he worked for the Indian National Congress, and became its President in 1899. His politics, however, was of the moderate variety as it was termed at the time. Even in the last decade of the nineteenth century when he entered politics, "extremism" as it was then called was gaining ground. The break between the "Moderates" and the "Extremists" of the National Congress came at the Surat session in 1906, during the life-time of Romesh Dutt. He, however, remained a Moderate till the end of his days.

The difference between the Moderates and the Extremists lay not so much in their ultimate objective, as in the methods to be employed in attaining the objective and the pace of progress towards the objective. As has been noticed, Romesh Dutt clearly envisaged that India should attain the same position as the White Colonies of Britain, that is, Canada, Australia or New Zealand. Though he did not use the term, this was indistinguishable from Dominion Status, as it came to be called later. The Extremists, on the other hand, wanted *Swaraj* or as Mahatma Gandhi preferred to call it later, *Purna Swaraj*. The concept of *Swaraj* was, however, not defined clearly, until the controversy in the late twenties of the twentieth century between Dominion status

and complete Independence. It was Jawaharlal Nehru, Netaji Subhas Bose and the younger sections in the Congress who ultimately swayed the balance in favour of complete Independence. This was, however, two decades beyond Romesh Dutt's days. In his life-time the goal was *Swaraj* or self-government, and this objective was shared by both the "Moderates" and the "Extremists."

There was, however, a basic difference in the methods to be adopted to reach the objective. Romesh Dutt and the moderate politicians of his school of thought believed that what was necessary was that strong and enlightened public opinion should develop in India both for the progressive introduction of self-government in the country, and against the adoption of ill-considered and unfair administrative and economic measures. On the background of this public opinion, if a true image of India, of her needs and requirements could be presented to the British public, it would be difficult, he thought, for British democracy to reject measures which were manifestly fair. Romesh Dutt did not, and here was an essential difference between his views and those of the younger politicians, consider the British connection with India as fundamentally wrong and undesirable. On the contrary, he thought that it was to the advantage of India that Providence had linked his destiny with that of Britain. There were few in India in his days who were more familiar with the wrongs and the injustices that British administration in India had committed. He had expressed himself on several occasions strongly and even indignantly on these issues. In his preface to the second volume of his *Economic History* he had stated, as has been noted earlier, that the British voter was as fair-minded as any other voter in the world, but that he would cease to be a British voter if he did not mind his own interests. He was thus conscious of

the fact that it was not the British citizen who was to blame but the system which placed him in the position of ruler of another country in which he was not basically interested. And yet, he did not revolt against this system. He was of opinion that the deficiencies could be remedied by a change of the institutional arrangements without a radical change of Indo-British relationship. He pointed out that the higher administration was manned very largely by foreigners, and representative institutions had not been developed which would enable the Indian point of view to be presented at the various policy-making levels. According to him, these were responsible for the wrong decisions that were being taken. To an extent, a limited extent, he was right, for with representative institutions or individual representatives at high levels of administration the ruling authorities would naturally find it difficult to ignore Indian public opinion. It was, however, too much to expect that a colonial administration would change its inherent character as long as power remained with it. Institutional changes of the nature envisaged by Romesh Dutt could, therefore, at best be temporary palliatives.

Consistent with his views on the British connection with India, Romesh Dutt believed in discussion and persuasion to achieve his objective. He spent a good deal of his time after retirement from service in England and he made good use of this time either lecturing to British audiences all over the country, or taking up specific issues, such as the Calcutta Municipal Bill or the proposed reforms, with persons in authority and position. To an extent, again, his efforts were successful, but these methods could not be expected to make an administration change its character. The "extremists" characterised these methods as those of "petition and prayer" and argued that a system imposed on India by force and

catering to certain interests, however sectional, could not be changed by such methods. There was a good deal of force in this argument, but it must be mentioned in fairness to Romesh Dutt and the "Moderates" in general that at the close of the nineteenth century or even in the first decade of the twentieth century no clear cut alternative programme had emerged. Terrorism was certainly in the air, specially in the first few years of the present century, and though the cult of violence was passionately adhered to by a section of the community and had evoked heroic acts of self-sacrifice on the part of a large number of gallant young men, terrorism by itself offered no alternative to the then current political programme, however ineffective the current programme might have been. The terrorist movement helped to awaken public opinion and create an anti-colonial, anti-imperialist attitude, but as a programme in isolation it did not stand much chance of success against the superior armed might of the ruling authorities. It was in fact not until a mass movement was initiated under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi with its programme of mass non-cooperation and civil disobedience that a method could be said to have been found which could successfully challenge the ruling authority. It was indeed the mass character of the movement thus initiated with widespread disaffection against the then established authority rather than the specific programmes of action which gave rise to the realisation that India could not be held against the will of the great majority of the people of the country, and resulted ultimately in the transfer of power to Indian representatives.

In the nineteenth century the political movement had just commenced. Naturally, it was initiated by leaders belonging to the educated middle classes. The concept of mass action outlined and implemented in practice by Mahatma

Gandhi in India had not been thought of. In fact, the time was not ripe for it, for a mass movement could be organised only when there was a strong feeling of wrong and injustice. The concept that colonialism or imperialism is *per se* wrong was not as widely held in the nineteenth century as it is in the twentieth. The specific acts of injustice for which the ruling authority were responsible were not widely known or appreciated at the time. It was to the credit of Romesh Dutt that he had analysed the economic administration of the British rule and brought to the notice of his countrymen the wrong perpetrated on them. He had thus contributed to the creation of conditions which made mass movement possible in future, and it was left to a leader of the stature of Mahatma Gandhi to give form and shape to it. Romesh Dutt and leaders of his generation could hardly be blamed for not initiating or advocating a movement for which the time came a decade or two later.

The views of Romesh Dutt and the Moderates on the pace of political progress also deserve mention. Romesh Dutt was satisfied with the Minto-Morley Reform which, according to modern standards, could hardly be regarded as even an introduction to a democratic form of Government. His belief in gradual evolution was undoubtedly based on caution, and the desire to ensure that the people should be trained by experience for the democratic process. The argument in support of this view was that even in a country like England the democratic form had evolved over a long period of years. There was perhaps something to be said for it, but a programme of gradual evolution is possible only with the cooperation of the rulers. It presumes willingness on the part of the rulers to transfer power gradually, a presumption which is hardly ever substantiated. In the absence of such cooperation the measure of "reform" achiev-

ed at any point of time is a result more of the relative strength of the two parties than of the requirements of the situation. It was, however, a measure of Romesh Dutt's faith in the goodwill of the British Government that he believed that progressive transfer of power was possible in the interests of the country. This faith was entirely consistent with his view that the British connection was basically good, and all that was needed was for the Indian point of view to be adequately represented before the ruling authorities.

### III

The genius of Romesh Dutt manifested itself in diverse fields, as this brief account of his life and works indicates. To all these fields he made substantial and lasting contributions and in many of them he was well ahead of his times. It is difficult to measure these contributions in absolute terms, and even more difficult to assess their comparative value. If a comparative assessment has to be made, however, his work in the economic field would probably stand out as his most outstanding contribution to the future of the country. His contribution to Bengali literature and his researches in Ancient Indian History were substantial, but his two volumes of *Economic History* and his *Famines in India* undoubtedly influenced more than any of his other works the future course of the national movement in the country. These books revealed facts of lasting interest, and outlined a point of view the force of which lapse of time has not dimmed. It can, of course, be argued that his economic works did not outline any economic programme based on social justice, but that was not the object of these writings. He was concerned more with historical analysis of



the economic administration than with outlining a programme of economic action. He dealt with the economic measures which required immediate rectification, and was concerned with the steps that needed to be taken immediately, in the circumstances which then prevailed, to prevent further deterioration of the economic condition of the country. In the colonial situation which then prevailed, it was a matter of the highest priority to analyse the economics of colonialism, to rebut the complacent theories of economic prosperity assiduously propagated by the colonial rulers and to create the right perspective and the correct consciousness among the people to enable them to judge adequately the economic policies pursued by the Administration. To this process Romesh Dutt contributed brilliantly with his books and writings on Indian Economics.

Romesh Dutt's analysis of the British connection with India was more radical than his political thinking, and undoubtedly contributed to the political radicalism that followed, but which he did not himself fully share. His *Economic History* showed how from the days of early British rule down to his own days the economic interests of India had been subordinated to those of the Colonial Power when they came into conflict with the latter, and how in fact the economics of India had been shaped to become a colonial adjunct catering to the economic requirements, as then conceived, of Britain. From this, two conclusions followed. The first, which Romesh Dutt never categorically enunciated, was that colonialism as a system under which one country ruled another was *per se* wrong. He moved towards this conclusion, quoted with approval, as has been noticed, the dictum of John Stuart Mill that there could be no such thing as government of one country by another, and yearned for the day when India would be as self-governing as the white



colonies of his days. His political caution, however, made him envisage this as the ultimate political goal to be reached by stages, and even then he did not conceive of complete severance of the British connection.

The second conclusion which could be drawn from his economic analysis was that since the colonial system was of advantage to the colonial power, and was conceived in the interests of the economic structure which then prevailed there could be no substantial modification of that system until either the economic structure at home of the Colonial Power underwent a change and colonialism ceased to be of advantage to it, or alternatively until circumstances were created by the colony in which it was difficult for the colonial power to continue to govern the colony. Romesh Dutt did not fully accept this conclusion, and continued to believe that what he regarded as aberrations of the prevailing system could be rectified through the working of the democratic processes in Britain. He was, therefore, concerned with building up a strong public opinion in India and with presenting this opinion adequately to the British public, rather than with creating circumstances in India in which colonial rule could cease to be worthwhile or of advantage to the Colonial Power.

Great men, as ordinary people, are the products of the environment and the influences in which they are born, they live and they work. Their greatness lies in assimilating these influences and cultural environments better than others, in discerning their essence and in influencing their direction for the benefit of society. Newton was a great scientist because he not only assimilated the science of his day, but by his contribution gave it a direction which helped to push it forward in the future generations. The stature of Newton as a scientist does not suffer because he did not anticipate

the conclusions of Einstein. The time was not ripe for Einstein in the days of Newton. Judged by this standard, as a person who helped by his contributions to push the country forward in several directions in which she has progressed since, the greatness of Romesh Dutt and the weight of his achievements must be ranked high. He did not fully anticipate the political developments of the future, but that does not detract from his stature or reduce the importance of his role as a Builder of Modern India. Along with a galaxy of outstanding men whom India had the good fortune to produce in the nineteenth and the early twentieth century, Romesh Dutt will go down in the memory of his grateful countrymen as one who helped to build the free and independent country which India is today.

## APPENDIX I

### IMPORTANT EVENTS IN THE LIFE OF ROMESH CHUNDER DUTT

Born . . . . .	13th August 1848
Marned to Matangini (Mohini) Bose .	1864
Sailed for England . . . . .	3rd March 1868
Passed competitive examination for Indian Civil Service . . . . .	1869
Joined his first official post as Assistant Magistrate, Alipore . . . . .	September 1871
Visited Europe on leave . . . . .	April 1886 to February 1887
Second visit to Europe on leave . . .	1893
Leave preparatory to retirement from ndian Civil Service and visit to Europe . . . . .	January 1897
IPresident, Indian National Congress (Lucknow Session) . . . . .	December 1899
Appointed Revenue Minister of Baroda . . . . .	August 1904
Appointed Member of the Decentrali- sation Commission . . . . .	1907
Appointed Dewan of Baroda . . . . .	1st June 1909
Died . . . . .	30th November 1909

## APPENDIX II

### IMPORTANT WORKS BY ROMESH CHUNDER DUTT

					<i>Published in</i>
1.	Three Years in Europe	.	.	.	1872
2.	Peasantry of Bengal	.	.	.	1875
3.	Literature of Bengal	.	.	.	1877
4.	"Banga-Bijeta" (Conqueror of Bengal)	}	Historical Novels in Bengali		1879
5.	"Madhabi Kankan" (Bracelet of Flowers)				
6.	"Maharashtra Jiban Prabhat" (The Dawn of Maharashtrian Life)				
7.	"Rajput Jiban Sandhya" (The Evening of Rajput Life)				
8.	Translation of the "Rig Veda" (into Bengali)	.	.	.	1885
9.	"Sansar"—Social Novel in Bengali	.	.	.	1885
10.	History of Civilisation in Ancient India	.	.	.	1890
11.	"Samaj"—Social Novel in Bengali	.	.	.	1893
12.	Lays of Ancient India (in English Verse)	.	.	.	1894
13.	England and India	.	.	.	1897
14.	"Mahabharata" (in English Verse)	.	.	.	1898
15.	"Ramayana" (in English Verse)	.	.	.	1899
16.	Famines in India	.	.	.	1900
17.	Economic History of India—				
	Vol. I	.	.	.	1902
	Vol. II	.	.	.	1904

### APPENDIX III

#### PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS AT LUCKNOW CONGRESS

When in October last I received through my friend, Mr. Bonnerjea, your kind invitation to preside at this meeting of the Indian National Congress, I confess, I received it with some degree of surprise and some degree of misgiving. I happened to be then engaged in the pleasant task, to which I have cheerfully devoted most of my spare time during the last fifteen years, of trying to interpret to my countrymen and to modern readers generally some of the literary heritage which has been left to us by our forefathers; and, I confess, the prospect of sudden change from the desk to the platform somewhat alarmed me. Nor was the alarm altogether groundless; for when I read the speeches made from this platform in past years by some of the ablest and most eloquent men that our country has produced during this generation, I felt grave doubts whether you were altogether wise in your choice in asking me to preside in the present year. However, I felt the great honour you did me in imposing the task upon me; I feel the high honour as I stand to-day among so many who are so well qualified to perform this task; and for better or for worse, I have accepted your kind proposal and am amidst you today. And if you will listen with some indulgence to the plain words of a plain man, I will try to convey to you in a few words some practical suggestions, on the administrative questions of the day.

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The Annual Session of the Indian National Congress was held at Lucknow in December 1899.

I need hardly tell you that these questions have received my attention and my consideration for years past; I have spoken and written on them during the last two years; and during the preceding twenty-six years I had constantly to deal with many of them in official correspondence. It is perhaps known to all of you that the Government of India and the Local Government permit and encourage the utmost freedom to all officials in the expression of their opinions in official correspondence on the administrative questions which constantly come up for discussion. It is in the course of such discussions that the men in the Civil Service come to know and to respect each other's opinions, and are often brought in closer contact with each other. And as we are holding this present meeting of our Congress in the North-West of India, I recall to-day with pride that it was in the course of a discussion of this nature over the Bengal Tenancy Bill which was passed into law in 1885, that I had the pleasure and the privilege of first knowing that sympathetic ruler and that distinguished statesman whom you now claim as Lieutenant-Governor of these provinces, but whom we in Bengal are proud to claim as originally of the Bengal Civil Service.

Gentlemen, I often felt it my duty in the course of these official discussions to suggest reforms on the basis of accepting in a larger degree the cooperation of the people of India in the administration of the country. And although I have ceased to be an official now, I still consider it my duty to do what lies in my humble power to advise and help the Government of the day in the great task of a good and successful administration based on the cooperation of the people. And it is because this is precisely the object of the Indian National Congress—it is because it is your aim and endeavour to sustain and help British administration based

on popular cooperation—that I find myself amongst you today, and in complete unison with you in views and aspirations.

### THE CREED OF THE CONGRESS

Gentlemen, I have perused a great portion of the Congress literature as published in a handy volume by the enterprising publisher Mr. Natesan; and to those who desire honestly to know the aims and aspirations of the educated men of India, I can honestly recommend a perusal of this valuable publication. An honest critic will find in this volume—from the first page to the last—a sincere desire to support and sustain the Government by the cooperation of the people, to strengthen the hand of the Government by fair criticism, to help the Government by keeping it informed of the views and aspirations of the people. These are services which would be useful and valuable to administrators in any country in the world, and these are services which are doubly valuable in India where the people are not represented in any of the Executive Councils and Secretariats where executive and legislative measures are first put into shape. For remember, gentlemen, that there are generally two sides to every question which comes up for discussion, and it is desirable and necessary that both sides should be properly represented and heard before the question is decided. It is no disrespect to the Civil Service of India to say that it represents, ably and fairly, the official side only of Indian questions. I have had the honour of passing the best years of my life in the Indian Civil Service, and I shall be the last person on earth to question either the ability, or the honesty of purpose, of those able and hard-working men who form that magnificent service. I have pleasant recollections of the years which I have passed in complete accord and



friendliness with my colleagues in that service, of the fair and handsome treatment which I received from my seniors, and of the loyal and zealous cooperation which I received from my juniors; and I will say this, that— take the Indian Civil Service with all its faults and all its shortcomings,— for hard work and honesty of purpose there is not a finer body of administrators in the world. Nevertheless, it must be admitted, and it is no disrespect to the Indian Civil Service to say it, that that service represents only the official view of Indian questions, and does not and cannot represent the people's views. There are two sides to every question, and it is absolutely necessary for the purpose of good government and of just administration that not only the official view but the people's view on every question should be represented and heard. There are local bodies in different parts of India which give expression to the people's views on local questions; but this National Congress is the only body in India which seeks to represent the views and aspirations of the people of India as a whole in all large and important, and if I may use the word, Imperial questions of administration. Therefore, this National Congress is doing a service to the Government the value of which cannot be overestimated and which, I feel certain, is appreciated by the Government itself. It is a gain to the administration to know what we feel, what we think, and what we desire,— though our demands cannot always be conceded. It is a help to responsible administrators to know in what direction our wishes and our aspirations tend, though they may not always agree with us. I honestly believe therefore that you are helping the cause of good administration and of good government in India by your deliberations year after year, and I trust and hope that you will continue to carry on these deliberations in the future, as

you have done in the past, with good sense and moderation, with loyalty to your rulers, and with fidelity to the real interest of the people. We cannot fail in this endeavour; the future is with us; and looking at the progress of nations all over the British Empire in every part of the world, I, for one, feel confident that we, too, are destined to move onwards as a portion of that great Empire, and that we, too, shall secure some measure of progress and self-government under the imperial rule of England. This is the creed of the Congress as it is mine, and it is, therefore, gentlemen, that I feel it an honour to find myself amidst you today. And consistently with this principle, my speech today will be, not one of criticism, but mainly and essentially one of practical suggestions to which the Government will, I humbly hope, give such consideration as they may seem to deserve.

#### FAMINE OF 1897

Gentlemen, it is a little over two years ago you celebrated in India, with every demonstration of loyalty and good feeling the sixtieth year of the reign of the Queen Empress. I happened to be in England on that day; and I witnessed with joy and gratification the august procession in London—Her Majesty driving in state through a circuit of six miles, preceded and followed by representatives of every portion of the British Empire, and cheered by half a million of loyal Englishmen who lined the circuit. Every contingent from every land was cheered as it accompanied the Queen, and I can tell you that none was cheered more loudly and more heartily than the Indian contingent—the Indian princes and rajas, distinguished by their graceful dress and noble demeanour, their manly bearing and their

soldier-like appearance. It was a great and imposing and gratifying sight, but it was clouded by one dark shadow. The British public felt, British newspapers wrote, and British statesmen spoke, that while every self-governing colony represented in that procession was prosperous and happy, India alone, with its vast population, was even then suffering from a famine which had spread over a larger extent of country than had ever been visited by famine in any single year. Questions were asked why there should be such famines in India when famines were unheard of in any other well-governed country in the world, and doubts were expressed if British rule in India had been altogether a blessing for the poor cultivators and labourers of India.

But, gentlemen, the famine of 1897 was not the only calamity of that year; it was accompanied by war outside our frontiers which cost us some millions and many brave lives, and it was accompanied by a plague the ravages of which are not yet over. In the midst of those calamities the Government thought it necessary to adopt rigorous measures, and the Government thought it wise to restrict that liberty of the Press which we in India had enjoyed for over sixty years. It is not my intention today to dwell on the sad occurrences of 1897, the saddest year in its accumulation of calamities since the time that India passed from the hands of the East India Company to the Crown. Nor is it my intention to revive today the discussions which were held in this country and in England when the unfortunate Sedition Bills were passed into law.

#### SEDITION LAW OF 1898

I recall with sadness the debates which took place in the Viceroy's Council and in the House of Commons when

these Bills were passed into law. It was my privilege to hear those debates in the House of Commons, and I think I only echo the general feeling of all educated men in this country when I acknowledge our debt of gratitude to those who so ably but so unsuccessfully fought for us both in the Viceroy's Council and in the House of Commons. I do not desire to renew these discussions, but now that the fight is over, and the Bills have been passed into law, I often ask myself if there is a single Englishman in this country with an intimate knowledge of the country and its people who honestly thinks that the reactionary measure was needed, or that it is answering any useful purpose or that it has strengthened the Government and increased its reputation and credit in the eyes of Europe. Gentlemen, the measure was based on a blunder—the blunder of connecting sedition with the spread of education. The truth is precisely the reverse of this. English education has not only not produced sedition in the land, but it has been the strongest weapon by which the Government has stamped out real sedition in this country within the last fifty years. In the dark days of 1857 and earlier there was real sedition in the land,—a real wish in some dark and obscure corners to overturn this great Empire. That desire was born of ignorance and lurked amidst ignorant classes, and the Government has successfully stamped out that feeling by the spread of education. There never was a greater imperialist among the Governors-General of India than Lord Dalhousie, and Lord Dalhousie strengthened and fortified the Empire by giving effect to the famous educational despatch of 1854, and spreading education through vernacular schools. There never was a stronger upholder of British dominion in its darkest days than Lord Canning, and Lord Canning established the Universities of Calcutta, Bombay

and Madras. The same policy has been pursued by successive Viceroys during the last forty years with the same object and the same effect, and wherever education has spread sedition in India is dead. And if real sedition still lingers, in any corner of India, it is in the darkness of ignorance, not in the sunlight of education and free discussion. If I were disposed to foment sedition in India I would desire in the first place to suppress all free discussion, suppress all newspapers, and suppress all public meetings, as a burglar puts out the lights of a room before he commits burglary. And I make bold to add, gentlemen, that if you had been inspired by hostile feelings against British rule in India, you would have worked in the dark, and not come forward from all parts of India, year after year, to openly and loyally place your views before the ruling power. Educated India has practically identified itself with British rule, seeks to perpetuate British rule, is loyal to the British rule, as Lord Dufferin said, not through sentiment, but through the stronger motive of self-interest; because it is by a continuance of the British rule that educated India seeks to secure that larger measure of self-government, that position among the modern nations of the earth, which it is our aim and endeavour to secure. Gentlemen, if you had a single representative in the Viceroy's Executive Council, if you had one Indian member to take a part in those deliberations in the Executive Council which resulted in the Sedition Law, you could have explained these matters then and there. But it is a penalty which all Governments constituted like the Executive Councils of India have to pay, that they have to decide questions after hearing one side only, and not the other. Only one view is properly represented before them, and not the other; and the ablest, the most just, and the most conscientious of

judges will make mistakes, if they base their decisions on evidence produced by one party, and not the other.

Only one word more before I leave this subject. I regret as much and as sincerely as any man in India the bitterness of tone which sometimes pervades journalism in this country. Five years ago, as officiating Commissioner of Burdwan, I had occasion to write on this subject, and if I allude to my report now, it is because the report was printed and published in the Calcutta Gazette, and is therefore not an official secret. I said on that occasion, and on many succeeding occasions, that differences in opinion must always exist between the English newspapers and the Indian newspapers in this country. English newspapers hold that an absolute government is the best and only possible government of India, and that any system of representation or self-government is a mistake. The Indian papers hold on the other hand that there can be no good government in a large and civilised country like India, and no satisfactory solution of those great problems like famine and the impoverishment of the humbler classes, without some cooperation of the people themselves in the control of the administration. It is possible, I said, to hold and maintain these opposite views without studied contempt and sneer on the one side, and bitterness of tone on the other side. And those journals which introduce this element of contempt and hatred in the discussion of administrative questions are creating difficulties for the British Government, and sowing seeds of evil in India. It is by some degree of sympathy, some degree of good feeling and neighbourly courtesy and not by Sedition Laws that the relations between the different sections of the Indian community can be improved. As the who has passed the best years of his life in administrative work, I have noticed that every improvement



in the tone of the English press is warmly responded to by the Indian press, and that every want of kindliness and good feeling adds to the difficulties of administration and weakens British rule in India.

### CALCUTTA MUNICIPALITY

But I pass over this subject, because it is not my object to make my speech a criticism of the Sedition Law, or of other measures already passed. I wish also to pass over with very few remarks the controversies relating to recent municipal laws, and to the Calcutta Municipality. These controversies are fresh in your minds, and the subject will, no doubt, receive ample justice from other speakers before we have closed our proceedings. To me one most consoling feature in the history of this unfortunate measure is the help rendered to our cause by so high an authority as the Right Honourable Sir Henry Fowler. It was my privilege to be a listener in the House of Commons on the memorable night when the late Secretary of State spoke from the Liberal front bench, supporting Mr. Herbert Roberts, and condemning the virtual withdrawal of that boon of self-government which it is the proud boast of England to have conferred on the metropolis of India. Gentlemen, even Sir Henry Fowler has spoken in vain—at least, for the present—but we are none the less grateful to him for his strong advocacy of a just and righteous cause, the cause of self-government in India. Nor are we less grateful to those who have fought the same battle in this country, foremost among whom stands Raja Binay Krishna Deb, a worthy scion of a worthy house which has been loyal and friendly to British rule in India since the days of Clive and Hastings. To our friends who fought in the Legislative Council, and to others who were true to the cause of our progress is due our



warmest acknowledgment and our deepest gratitude. Gentlemen, their example, their endeavours and their sustained effort will live in the memory of our countrymen, and will find a place in the history of our country. A constitutional battle so fought is not fought in vain, and our children and our children's children, to whom we shall hand down the heritage of a loyal and considerational agitation for self-government under the imperial and progressive rule of England will look upon the closing of the nineteenth century as an epoch in the history of the land, and will draw new inspiration from the example of the men of this century who have lived and worked and fought—not in vain. There are defeats which are more glorious than victories, and the defeat which we have sustained will strengthen our hearts, freshen our hopes, and nerve our hands for new endeavours.

With regard to the actual result of this battle, I do not know if there is any class of men in Calcutta who in their hearts like it much. I have asked myself if there is any Englishman familiar with the history of the Calcutta Municipality who thinks that the new measure will improve administration, promote sanitation, or secure the willing cooperation of all classes of citizens. I do not know if the officials of Calcutta who have done so much in the past to foster municipal self-government will contemplate with gratification the ruin of the noble edifice which they built up after the labours of a quarter of a century. I do not know if the European merchants of Calcutta, who are busy, practical men, and have lived in amity and good feeling with the Indian population, will like the idea to spread over the country that wherever English trade prosper, not only Indian manufacturers, but Indian political and municipal rights, too, must be sacrificed. I do not know if

the new City Fathers of Calcutta contemplate with joy their prospects of success, or the odium of a failure, with difficult sanitary problems before them, and a poor, inadequate, almost beggarly income. What the elected Commissioners have done in the way of sanitary reforms with this poor income is a matter of history. Gentlemen, I remember Calcutta some forty years ago under the administration of Government officials, when we as school boys had to walk to school by open drains and reeking filth. I remember Calcutta as it was under the Justices of the Peace, some thirty years ago, with its awkward tale of waste and jobbery. And I have seen year after year the improvements effected, the sanitary reforms done, the wasteful expenditure cut down, and every department of the office brought to order, by the elected Commissioners within the last twenty-five years, by some of the best men whom our country has produced, and who have given years of their life to this patriotic work. Their work has been consistently recognised in past years by successive rulers of the land, but it is necessary to give a dog a bad name in order to hang it; and it was reserved for Sir Alexander Mackenzie who was a friend of self-government under the administration of Mr. Gladstone and Lord Ripon, to end his career in India by giving the self-government system in Calcutta a bad name and then effectually strangling it. Gentlemen, I feel sad whenever I think over these matters, and I feel sad when I recollect that this thing has come to pass in the first year of Lord Curzon's administration. I honestly believe that no Viceroy ever came out to India with a more sincere desire to work for the good of the people, and with the help and cooperation of the people, I honestly think that his Lordship in Council gave a most careful consideration to the question before he issued his own proposals; and if

that Council had contained a single Indian member to represent the Indian view of the question and to explain the true history of the municipality during the last forty years, I am persuaded Lord Curzon would have taken the same view as Sir Henry Fowler has taken, and would have effected the needed reforms in the Calcutta Municipality and strengthened the executive, without virtually sacrificing self-government. But our difficulty and our danger lie in this, that great administrative questions are discussed and settled in Executive Councils where we are not represented and not heard. I do not say that the official view is necessarily wrong, and that our view is necessarily right; but I do say that both views should be fairly represented before the tribunal which shapes our destinies. I do not say that we have more knowledge or more experience or more ability than the high officials who represent the official view of the question but I do say that we view questions from a different point of view, and that there should be a constitutional channel for the representation of our views in the Executive Councils of the empire. For when the Executive Councils have decided a question, the thing is done—the Legislative Councils simply carry out the official mandate with unimportant alterations, as the Bengal Council has done in the case of their Municipal Bill.

#### FAMINE OF 1899

But, gentlemen, I must extricate myself from this subject and pass on at once to the great calamity which now stares us in the face, the famine, from which million of our countrymen are suffering even now; and with your permission I will devote all my remaining time to this one great subject—which appears to me to be one of paramount importance—the famines of India, and the condition of our

poorer classes. Gentlemen, you are aware of the prompt measures which have been already adopted by the Government of Lord Curzon for the relief of distress in British territory and for helping Indian Princes to relieve distress in Native States during this time of trouble and anxiety. And those of you who have had experience of relief operations in previous famines will feel confident that Englishmen when they have once put their hand to the plough, will not leave the work half done. It is with a pardonable pride that I recall past days when I myself was employed along with my English colleagues in famine relief operations, or in providing against impending famines, in 1874, in 1876, and in 1896; and judging from my past experience, and judging from the measures adopted this year, I feel confident that no effort, no expenditure, no means humanly possible, will be spared by a benevolent Government to save life and to relieve distress among the millions of our suffering countrymen. And in the face of that calamity it behoves us all, it behoves this National Congress, to do all we can to strengthen the hands of the Government, to offer our help according to our capacity and power, and to place our suggestions before the Government, not in a spirit of criticism, but in a spirit of loyalty and cooperation, for the relief of the present distress and for the prevention of such distress in future.

#### ALLEGED CAUSES OF FAMINES

It is in this spirit that I suggest that the time has come when it is desirable to take some effective measures to improve the condition of the agricultural population of India. Their poverty, their distress, their indebtedness, all this is not their fault. Sometimes it is asserted that the poverty of the people and the famines which we witness in India, and

in no other well-governed country on earth are due to the over-increase in population. Gentlemen, this is not so. If you go into figures you will find that the population does not increase in India as fast as it does in many European countries like Germany and England. And if you read the paper written by Mr. Baines, the late Census Commissioner of India, in the first volume of the British Empire Series recently issued in London, you will find the Census Commissioner himself admits that the growth of population in India is not so fast as that in Germany or in England. Sometimes again it is asserted that the poverty of the Indian agriculturist is due to his own improvidence, wastefulness, and folly. Gentlemen, this is not so. Those who have passed the best portion of their life among the Indian cultivators as I have done, will tell you that the Indian cultivator is about the most frugal, the most provident, the most thoughtful about his future among all races of cultivators on earth. If he goes to the money-lender it is not because he is in love with the money-lender, but because he has nothing to eat. If he pays 25 or 37 per cent as interest on loans, it is because he cannot get loans on lower interest on such security as he can offer.

We are all aware that the Government of India are at the present time endeavouring to safeguard the interests of the cultivators in the Punjab and elsewhere from the claims of money-lenders on their land. I do not wish to speak on the merits of the Bill, because I never wish to say a word or to express an opinion on inadequate information, and the information I have been able to gather about the condition of the Punjab tenants is not yet as full and complete as I could wish it to be. All that I can say is that this idea, that the condition of cultivators can be improved, not by helping them to save, but by restricting their right

of sale and mortgage, is an old idea which has been found utterly unsound in Bengal. The policy was advocated when the Bengal Tenancy Bill was under discussion fifteen years ago; I myself took my humble part in strongly resisting the policy; and if I remember correctly, the able Revenue Secretary of Bengal, who is now the Lieutenant Governor of these Provinces took the same view. I allude to these views because they are no secret, and will be found published in the Calcutta Gazette of that year. The absurdity of relieving the cultivators by virtually taking away from the market value of the one property they have on earth was strongly exposed, and the idea of placing any restrictions on mortgage and sale of lands was ultimately abandoned.

Curiously enough, the question was mooted again in Bengal only three years ago, showing what vast importance is attached to official views and ideas formed in close council chambers. The fear was entertained that land was slipping away from the hands of the cultivating classes to the hands of the money-lending classes, and that to restrict the right of sale and mortgage was the only remedy. I happened to be then acting as Commissioner of Orissa, a part of Bengal, which is not permanently settled, and where the condition of the cultivators is worse than in other parts of Bengal. If the free right of sale or mortgage has worked evil in any part of Bengal, it must have done so in Orissa. But I was able to show from the records of half-a-century that, although the right of sale, and of mortgage had been freely exercised, land had not slipped out of the hands of the cultivating classes, and that to take away from the market value of the land was not the best way to help the cultivators. Fortunately, the greatest revenue authority of Bengal, Mr. Stevens, who afterwards



acted as Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, took the same view, and the idea of helping the cultivators by decreasing the market value of their land was once more abandoned. I do not wish, gentlemen, to generalise on these facts; I do not wish to infer that what would be needless and mischievous in Bengal and Orissa may not be needful and useful for the time being in some parts of India where matters may have reached a more acute stage. But what I do wish to emphasize is that such remedies cannot permanently improve the condition of the cultivators; that in order to improve their condition, we must make it possible for them—as it is possible in Bengal—to save in good years against failure of harvest in bad years.

#### REAL CAUSE OF FAMINES AND THE REMEDY

Gentlemen, the real cause of the poverty of our agricultural population is simple and even obvious, if we have the courage and the honesty to seek for it and to grasp it. It is not over-population, for the population does not increase faster than in European countries, does not increase faster than the area of cultivation. It is not the natural improvidence of the cultivator, for those who know the Indian cultivator will tell you that with all his ignorance and superstition, he is as provident, as frugal, as shrewd in matters of his own interest, as the cultivator in any parts of the globe. The real cause of his wretchedness and indebtedness is that except in Bengal and a few other tracts, the land assessment is so heavy that the cultivator is not able to save in good years enough to meet the failure of harvests in bad years. All our village industries, like spinning and weaving, have been killed by a free competition with the steam and machinery of England. Our cultivators and even our village industrial classes therefore



virtually depend on the soil as the one remaining source of their subsistence. The land assessments should therefore be made in a liberal and even a generous spirit. There is every desire in the high officials to make the assessments in a liberal spirit, but as the people have no voice in controlling these assessments, they are found in the actual working to be often illiberal and harsh. They do not leave the cultivators enough to be able to save; and cultivators therefore fall victims to famine whenever the harvests fail.

### BENGAL

The old Hindu law, based on the actual experience of thousands of years, sanctioned one-sixth of the gross produce of the land as the maximum rent. The experience of modern times confirms the wisdom of this ancient rule. In Bengal, where the Permanent Settlement and the laws of 1859, 1868 and 1885 save the cultivators from the undue enhancements, the average rent paid by cultivators to landlords does not exceed one-sixth the gross produce in any district, and falls far short of it in eastern districts. The result is that Permanently Settled Bengal which suffered from the most terrible famine in the last century, has been generally free from destructive famines in recent times. The famines of Behar in 1874 and 1897 were comparatively mild, and there was no loss of life. Extend the Bengal rule to other parts of India, make one-sixth of the gross produce the maximum rent leviable from cultivators in other provinces and the problem of preventing famines in India is solved.

### NORTH-WESTERN PROVINCES

In the North-Western Provinces and Oudh the cultivators are, generally speaking, not safeguarded by a Perma-

ment Settlement. Each new assessment means an increase in Government revenue. Let us find out in what position the actual cultivator is left by such settlements. The system of settlements in the North-Western Provinces has often been described, but I have never seen a more lucid account of it, within a brief compass, than in the evidence of Sir Antony MacDonnell before the Currency Committee which lately sat in London. Read His Honor's answer to question Nos. 5737 to 5740, and you have a clear account of the North-West settlements in a nut-shell. There are two salient facts which I will place before you from this account. In the first place the Government allows the landlords to make their own arrangements with the cultivators, and then demands one-half of what the landlord actually gets, after making certain reductions. In the second place, under these arrangements the landlords are actually getting about 20 per cent of the gross produce in money, and the Government share is one-half of that, or ten per cent of the produce. Gentlemen, these arrangements are better than those in many other parts of India, and you may be sure the rules are worked considerably, and even leniently, by a ruler who yields to none in India in his real sympathy for the actual cultivator. But nevertheless I should have been relieved to learn that the 20 per cent of the gross produce represented the maximum limit of rent, and not the average rent. Without such a maximum limit the cultivator has no assurance against over-assessment and undue enhancement. And a landlord who has submitted to an increase of the Government demand at a settlement has the temptation to reimburse himself by raising his rents—as a squeezed sponge fills itself when thrown into the water—to be squeezed again at the next settlement, thirty years later. Adopt the ancient Hindu rule, which is virtually

still the rule in Bengal; make one sixth the actual produce—or even one-fifth the actual produce—the maximum limit of rent under all circumstances, and you make the cultivators of these provinces as prosperous as they are in Bengal, and the problem of disastrous and fatal famines is virtually solved.

### MADRAS

The state of things is far worse in Madras. Some portions of the Madras Presidency are permanently settled, but in the greater portion of the Province the revenue is not permanently settled; there is no class of landlords, and the Government demands as revenue one-half of the net produce of the land, i.e., of the produce after deducting the cost of cultivation. For a clear, and luminous and brief account of how this system has worked I would refer you to the speeches made in recent years by the Raja of Bobbili, the Hon'ble Subba Rao and by Mr. Venkataratnam, himself a large landholder and President of the Godavari District Association. They point out that the rights of the Madras cultivators have not been strengthened as in Bengal, by successive Acts within this half century, but have been weakened by successive measures of the Government. They point out that in 1857, the proprietary right of the cultivator with fixity of assessment was admitted by the Government; that in 1882 under Lord Ripon's administration a virtual pledge was given that no enhancements would be allowed except on the equitable ground of a rise in prices; and that at the present day these pledges are ignored, these safeguards are withdrawn and enhancements are actually made on the ground of reclassification of soils as well as of rise in prices. More than this, I read a passage in the Madras Standing Information of 1879, that the land-tax estimated

at one-half of the net produce should not exceed 40 per cent of gross produce where the land is irrigated at Government cost, and should not exceed 33 per cent of the gross produce in the case of lands not so irrigated. When I read a rule like this, I am filled with bewilderment and pain. Let me mention, gentlemen, that when the Tenancy Bill of Bengal was under discussion in 1884, I had the honour to recommend that 20 per cent of the gross produce—which is a little over the old Hindu rate—should be fixed as the maximum of rent payable by a cultivator. My proposal was accepted by the then Revenue Secretary of Bengal who is now the honoured ruler of these North-West Provinces and Oudh. The proposal accordingly found a place in the Tenancy Bill drafted by the Government of Bengal, but it was not ultimately passed into law, because in many parts of Bengal, the zamindars were getting much less than 20 per cent of the produce; and to frame a statute for maximum rent might induce landlords in all parts of Bengal to screw up the rental to that maximum. The argument was good, and I was not sorry that my proposal was rejected. But it is somewhat curious that while the Government declined to fix for private zamindars in Bengal a maximum rent of 20 per cent of the produce, there is actually a rule in their Standing Information Book fixing 33 and 40 per cent of the gross produce as the maximum land-tax or revenue realizable by the Government! Are you surprised that under the circumstances there should be such repeated and disastrous famines in Madras, and that as pointed out by Mr. A. Rogers—late of the Indian Civil Service and a high authority in revenue matters—a great deal of land is out of cultivation because cultivators cannot pay the tax that is demanded by the State? The rule in Madras is as I have said before, to demand one-half the net produce—i.e., the

value of the produce after deducting the cost of cultivation. Gentlemen, if this means one-half the economic rent, as Sir Charles Wood desired it to be in his despatch of 1864, then the tax should not exceed one-sixth the produce of any field, and should, for the whole Province, be about one-tenth the average produce as it is in Northern India.

### BOMBAY AND THE PUNJAB

Gentlemen, I have not time today to go over the land-revenue arrangements in other parts of India—of the Bombay Presidency or of the Punjab. In Bombay we have generally the same system as in Madras, the Government generally receiving the tax direct from the cultivators. But the settlement officers in Bombay take into consideration what has been paid by cultivators in previous years without difficulty, and do not endeavour to estimate the field produce at all;—under such a system, where is the security to the cultivator, where is the motive to save? In the Punjab the land-system is somewhat similar to that of the North-Western Provinces; but you will find on examination that neither in Bombay nor in the Punjab is the cultivator assured an adequate proportion of the produce of the land he cultivates; and without such assurance his condition cannot be improved and he cannot be saved from famines merely by tinkering with his relations with his money-lender. I am not discussing today the merits of the different systems prevailing in the different Provinces of India—the Zemindari system of Bengal, the Talukdari system of Oudh, the Mahalwari system of the North-West, the Malguzari system of Central India, or the Ryotwari system of Southern India. Nor am I discussing the desirability of extending the Permanent Settlement to all parts of India as was recommended by Lord Canning in 1860, though I

myself think, that would be a wise and a generous measure to which the Government is pledged by its many promises in the past. I am not entering into these subjects in order to avoid all discussion, all controversy; and I am laying down a proposal which must receive universal assent without any controversy—viz., that the cultivator should be assured an adequate share of the produce of his land if he is to be saved from indebtedness and poverty, distress and famine. I have confined myself to the actual condition of the cultivator and incidence of the land-tax on the cultivator, for in India the cultivator is the nation. Never mind under what system or under what settlement he lives, assure to him an adequate proportion out of the produce of his land, and he is saved, and the nation is saved.

#### CENTRAL PROVINCES

But before I leave this subject I must say one word about the Central Provinces of India, which have suffered so disastrously in the famine of 1897, and which is suffering once more under the famine of 1899. The Central Provinces have suffered more from recent famines than any other part of India because the land-revenue settlements have been more severe and more harsh not in their intention, but in their actual operation, than in any other part of India. I constantly heard in England, as I have no doubt you constantly heard in this country, of the disastrous results of the recent revenue settlements in that Province, initiated by Sir Alexander Mackenzie. But I will not mention here what I have heard, I will limit my remarks entirely to the facts contained in official reports, and stated in the House of Commons by the Secretary of State for India in reply to questions put to him in March last year, by one of the truest friends of the India cultivator, Mr. Samuel Smith.



Gentlemen, there is a healthy rule, generally followed in the North-Western Provinces, that settlements are made for thirty years, because it is undesirable to harass the people with frequent enhancements and frequent settlement operations. Sir Alexander Mackenzie departed from this rule, and ordered the present settlement for twenty years, save in a few backward tracts, where I suppose still shorter settlements have been made. There is another healthy rule, followed in the North-Western Provinces, that the land-revenue is fixed at one-half the rent received by landlords. Sir Alexander Mackenzie cancelled this rule, and the Government revenue is now fixed at 50 to 60 per cent in the recent settlement. Add to this certain local rates, and the Government demand on the Malguzars comes to nearly 70 per cent of their supposed collections. I ask every impartial man, every fair-minded administrator, why settlements have been made in the Central Provinces for twenty years or less when settlements are made in the North-West for thirty years? I ask every responsible ruler why the Government should demand 60 per cent from the Malguzar of the Central Provinces when the Government receives only about 40 per cent in the North-West according to the evidence of Sir Antony MacDonnell? These differences in figures may not mean much to the theoretical statesman, but they mean life and death to the Indian cultivator. Every tampering with the settled rules in land settlement, every lowering of the period of settlements, every increase in the proportion of the Government demand means the further impoverishment of the cultivators, means increased wretchedness and indebtedness in ordinary times, increased death in famines. Why gentlemen, this very experiment was tried in these North-Western Provinces; the Government demand at first was not half but two-



thirds of the assets of the landlords; and that rule created a degree of suffering to the people greater than all the wars of the first half of this century. That rule was ultimately abandoned in 1855, and the Government demand was fixed at one-half the rental of the landlord; and is it fair that we should go back in the Central Provinces to the old rule which our experience has taught us here to be harsh and cruel to the cultivators? If the people had any control over the executive action in the Central Provinces, the tampering with the old established settlement rules would not have been allowed. If the people had been represented in the Viceroy's Executive Council to press these matters, no Viceroy of India would have permitted such departure from the usual settlement rules, a departure which has been disastrous in its consequences on the condition of the people and increased the deaths from famines in the Central Provinces.

Gentlemen, I have detained you longer on this subject than I had intended, but the importance of the subject is my excuse. I state my deliberate opinion, based on a careful study of the question for thirty years, that the land-revenue arrangements in India are responsible, not for bringing on famines, but for deepening the effects of these famines; and secondly, that if the position of the cultivator was assured, if the demand from him were fixed within equitable and fixed limits, loss of lives could be prevented on the occurrence of famines, as it has been prevented in Bengal. British administration has done much for us; it has given us internal peace, it has given us education, it has brought us nearer to western civilisation. But British administration has not performed all its duty so long as the country is desolated by famines, unheard of in any other civilised and well-governed country. My conviction is, and

I say it loudly before the Government that these foreign and local loans are mainly owing to the cause that our villages and towns are poor and our valuable lands are over-cultivated. My conviction is and I lay it boldly before the Government that the enormous loss of lives, a prevention of which could be effected through more careful husbandry, is the main reason for the low value of every produce and of every property of the land that it produces.

### MILITARY EXPENDITURE, NATIONAL DEBT, CURRENT INDUSTRIES, SERVICES

Coming now then to various other causes of the poverty of India under British Rule which I have not touched upon, the first one which I do not wish to touch upon, because it has been discussed fully, completely and repeatedly by ourselves at previous meetings of this Congress, and some of them will be discussed again this year by other parties. There is the question of the enormous Military Expenditure and the maintenance of a vast army out of the resources of India not for the requirements of India but for the requirements of the British Empire in Asia, Africa and even in Europe. There is the question of the National Debt which in Great Britain has been reduced by about 175 millions since 1860 and which has grown up by over 100 millions in India within the period, causing an increasing drain out of the revenues of India for the payment of interest in England. There is the question of the Currency which has been lately settled by the Currency Committee in a manner not conducive to the interests of the millions of cultivators whose debts have been increased and savings derelict. There is the question of unemployment and helping the Industrial Classes and of giving employment a question which has been

and exhaustively dealt with by one of the most learned and thoughtful writers of our generation the Honble Mr. Justice Ranade of Bombay. And there is the question of the possible saving in expenditure by the larger employment of the educated people of India, not only in the Indian Service, but in the higher grade of all services—Commercial and Medical, Police and Engineering, Post Office and Telegraph. Three generations of Indians have been educated in English schools and colleges in India; they have proved their fitness and capacity in every place they have held; and yet they are virtually Outlanders in this country so far as a real control over administration is concerned.

I pass over these and other cognate subjects because I have no time to deal with them, and because you have often dealt with them frequently and exhaustively, and will deal with many of them again. I will only repeat that it is perfectly possible to cut down expenditure to moderate and ascertainate amounts; to revive industries and to prevent deaths from famines; if there is a real and honest determination to rule India for the good of the people and with the co-operation of the people. Gentlemen, I wish with your permission to add one or two words on this last subject, viz., the desirability of enlisting the co-operation of the people in the work of administration—the desirability of bringing the administration in closer touch with the people and bringing our rulers in closer touch with ourselves. This is desired by every enlightened and far-sighted ruler as well as by ourselves, and this is calculated to improve the administration and to make British rule in India stronger and more popular. A commencement has been made in this direction since the days of Munro and Lugdenston and Lord William Bentinck, and what I wish

suggest is not a new departure, but a progress on the lines already laid down. I do not myself believe in new departures and novel experiments in administration; having passed the best years of my life in administration I naturally have more faith in gradual and cautious progress on the lines which have already been laid down.

### VILLAGE UNIONS

Gentlemen, I will begin with villages—because, as I have already said, in India the villager represents the nation. In village administrations there is no touch between the rulers and the people, the only link between the administrators and the people in civil administration is the hated link of the police. It is a misfortune and an administrative mistake that our District officers should have so little direct touch with the villagers and their natural leaders, and should work so entirely through the police. If there is distress in the land, the police makes enquiries; if there is cholera epidemic in the land the police distributes cholera pills; if a village tank has given way or the village water supply dried up the police reports and organises help; if a tree has been blown down and obstructs a village path, (I have seen instances of this myself), the villagers are powerless to help themselves until the police comes and removes the obstruction. It seems to be a mockery that the very country which was the first to organise village communities, village Panchayats, and village self-government and cherished these institutions for 3,000 years, should be rendered so absolutely helpless, and should be ruled through the undesirable agency of the police. Gentlemen, the mistake has been discovered and Village Unions have been formed or are in the course of formation in most Provinces in India. Make these Village Unions real centres of village administration

in so far as is consistent with good Government. Parcel out each Sub-division into twenty or thirty Village Unions, entrust the Union Committees with the charge of village roads, village tanks, village drainage, village education, and village hospitals, and send over to them all petty civil and criminal cases, not for judicial disposal, but for amicable settlement. A great deal of expensive litigation and bad feeling in villages can thus be stopped, a great deal of useful work can thus be done, and what is more, the natural leaders of the village population will thus come in touch with the Sub-divisional and District administrators, and will form the agents of village administration in so far as they are fit to take that position. An unsympathetic system of rule through the police will thus be replaced by a rule with the cooperation of the people themselves.

### MUNICIPAL TOWNS

From the subject of Villages I come to the subject of Municipal Towns which are receiving a great deal of attention now. Gentlemen, I consider it of primary importance that we should insist on efficient municipal administration, and that power should be given to the Government to ensure such efficient administration if the Municipal Commissioners are slack. Such power is retained by the Government in England, and it is more necessary that such power should be retained by the Government in India. But having provided for this, I am of opinion that the work should be done through the elected Commissioners and not through the officials or secretaries appointed by the Government. The latter system ruins self-government, and is not needed. I have myself supervised the work of every Municipality in a District as a District Officer, and I have supervised the work of all the Municipalities in a Division

as a Divisional Commissioner. The Municipal Commissioners were sometimes zealous and sometimes slack, sometimes they went the right way and sometimes the wrong way; but I have never found them obstructive; I have never found them averse to sanitary improvement or general progress; I have never found them other than amenable to reason and advice. With some tact and patience and sympathy we can get all that we want to do through the men elected by people themselves; and it is unwise and undesirable, it is a confession of our own incompetency and want of sympathy, to try to replace the elective system by men appointed by the Government to do Municipal work in the small District towns of India. The aptitude of Self-Government in towns and villages is, in India, a heritage of three thousand years, and to seek to ignore it is an administrative blunder, and a confession of our own incompetency.

### DISTRICT BOARDS

Coming next to the subject of District Boards, the question is often asked why non-official chairmen should not be appointed over these Boards. The reason, gentlemen, in the generality of cases, is that non-official gentlemen who know their own villages and estates well, have not the same knowledge of the District as a whole as the District Officer. We must, above all, insist on efficient work being done—and generally the District Officer is the only man who can in the ordinary course of his tours supervise and secure efficient work throughout his District. At the same time I would not make any hard and fast rule; and where we have retired Government servants or private gentlemen who know their Districts well, and who have the capacity and the time for administrative work, it would be a gain and not a loss to our administration to see such gentlemen

appointed chairmen of District Boards; and I sincerely hope to see a beginning made by the Government in this direction. Another question which is often discussed in connexion with District Boards is the poverty of their income. This, gentlemen, is a real and a grave evil; and it has become not only desirable but necessary that for large provincial schemes of irrigation and drainage, the resources of the District Boards should be supplemented by provincial grants. You are aware how much good is done in these provinces by a system of irrigation-wells; and there is no reason why the work of other works for the prevention of famine should not be made over to the District Board on allotments made by the Provincial Government. In Bengal the crying evil is bad drainage, which causes that malaria which is the curse of one-half of the province. There is no reason why a provincial grant should not be made to every District Board for the proper drainage of the District. Gentlemen, I have said it elsewhere that the money spent on one needless trans-frontier war, if spent in improving the drainage of Bengal, would save millions of the people permanently from one of the direst curses of the present age. My advice is, make the District Boards real agents of beneficent administration with the cooperation of the people; don't strangle them by the shackles of officialism; don't starve them by want of funds.

#### PROVINCIAL LEGISLATIVE COUNCILS

And now, gentlemen, I come to the important subject of Provincial Legislative Councils, and on this subject also my suggestion will be to proceed on the lines already laid down and not to take a new departure. The object of allowing District and Municipal bodies to elect members of these Councils was to allow the views of the people to be repre-



sented, and I think every responsible administrator in India will admit that this wise step has improved and strengthened the legislative machinery of the Government. Even when the views of the elected members are rejected—and they are often rejected—even then the expression of their views is a gain to the cause of administration. The time has now come when a fuller scope may be given to this expression of our views and the representation of our opinions. Half-a-dozen members, elected under somewhat complicated rules can scarcely give expression to the views of a province with a population of thirty or forty millions or more. Is it too much to hope that in the not remote future the Government will find it possible to permit every District to be represented by its own member? I do not object to the number of official and nominated members being also increased; I do not object to the Councils sitting five days or six days in the week instead of one day; and I do not object to the head of the Government reserving the power of vetoing a measure, even against the views of the majority of the Council, in urgent cases as the Queen of England has theoretically the power to refuse her consent to a measure passed by both Houses. With these safeguards, I would suggest an expansion of the Provincial Councils on the basis of each District being represented by its member, so that there may be an adequate expression of the people's opinions and views on every question. We do not wish for the absolute control of the administration of the country, but we do demand an adequate means of placing our views before the Government before it decides on questions affecting our welfare.

#### PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE COUNCILS

But, gentlemen, the Legislative Councils deal with legislation only; there are large and important measures of

administration which do not come within the scope of these Councils. The weakness of the present system of Government is that in the decision on these administrative measures the people have no voice and are not heard at all. To take one instance out of hundreds which will no doubt suggest themselves to you, the people of the Central Provinces of India had no constitutional means of declaring whether the revenue settlement should be for twenty or thirty years; whether the Government demand should be 50 per cent of the Malguzars' assets or 60 per cent; and the decision at which the Government arrived without the constitutional advice of the people has been disastrous. Gentlemen, this defect can be rectified, this weakness may be removed. There are Executive Councils in Bombay and in Madras; similar Executive Councils may be formed in the North-West Provinces and the Punjab, in the Central Provinces and in Bengal, and at least one member of the Executive Council should be an Indian gentleman with experience in administrative work, and representing the views of his countrymen. It is usual for a member of an Executive Council to have a portfolio, *i.e.*, to have one department of work assigned to him; and the work which I would assign to the Indian member is Land Revenue, Agriculture and Industries. There is no department of work in which an Indian member can make himself more valuable to the voiceless millions of cultivators and artisans. The addition of the one Indian member will not weaken Provincial administration. It will strengthen such administration, make it more sympathetic and bring it into somewhat closer touch with the people.

#### THE VICEROY'S EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

And, gentlemen, am I aspiring too high when I hope for similar seats for Indian members in the cloudy heights

of Simla? Am I urging anything unreasonable when I propose that the Viceroy who has the benefit of consulting experienced English administrators in his Executive Council, should also have the advantage of hearing the views and opinions of a few Indian members in the same Council before he decides on questions affecting the interests of the people of India? Am I urging anything unwise when I propose that the Viceroy, when he considers measures affecting the condition of the indebted cultivators, the operations of the plague and famine relief, the rules of land-revenue settlements, the questions affecting Hindu and Mahomedan customs and manners, should have by him, in his own Executive Council, a few Indian gentlemen who represent the views, the opinions and the feelings of the people? An Executive Council cannot be much enlarged without loss of efficiency but surely the Viceroy's Council could make room for three Indian gentlemen, one to represent Bengal and Assam, another to represent the North-West and the Punjab, and the third to represent Bombay, Madras and the Central Provinces. The selection should rest, of course, with the Viceroy himself, for anything like election into an Executive Council would be absurd; and the three Indian members should be entrusted with the departments of Agriculture, Industries and Land Revenue of their respective provinces. The wise and magnanimous Akbar entrusted his Land Revenue arrangements to Todar Mal; and the British Government may consider it wise and statesman-like to avail itself of the experience of Indian gentlemen in controlling the condition of the voiceless and impoverished cultivators and manufacturers of India. I myself think that the administration of the country would be vastly improved by such representation of Indian opinions in our highest Councils and that the Government of India and the Govern-

ment of the provinces would be brought in closer touch with the people.

### PROGRESS IN THE FUTURE

And now, gentlemen, it only remains for me to thank you once more for the great honour you have done me by electing me to preside on this occasion, and for the kind and patient hearing you have given me. I have been somewhat of an optimist all my life, I have lived in that faith and I should like to die in that faith. The experiment of administration for the people, not by the people, was tried in every country in Europe in the last century, by some of the best-intentioned sovereigns that ever lived, who are known in history as the Benevolent Despots of the 18th century. The experiment failed because it is an immutable law of nature that you cannot permanently secure the welfare of a people if you tie up the hands of the people themselves. Every country in Europe recognises this truth now, and England foremost of all. Every English colony has obtained a system of self-government, and from being discontented and disaffected they are now the strongest supporters of the British empire. And a system of complete Self-Government in local affairs was conceded to Ireland by the present Government less than two years ago, when Lord Curzon was a distinguished member of that Government. The conditions of India are different, and I admit freely and fully that we want a strong centralised Government here; and if the moderate scheme I have proposed tended in any way to weaken the Indian Government, the proposal, gentlemen, would not have come from me. But I have discussed the subject with many eminent Englishmen now in England and possessing vast experience in Indian administration, and I have asked them

to reject my scheme if they thought it would weaken the Indian Government instead of greatly strengthening it. Gentlemen, I have never been told in reply that the scheme would weaken the Government. It is isolation, it is exclusiveness, it is want of touch with the people which weakens British rule in India, and my desire is to strengthen that rule by bringing it in touch with the people, by enlisting the zealous cooperation of a great and loyal nation.

Permit me, gentlemen, to refer for a moment to my own experience as a District Officer. You are aware that a District Officer is liable to frequent transfers; and I was sometimes in charge of districts where 75 per cent of the people were Hindus, and at other times of districts where 75 per cent were Mahomedans. I may remark in passing that everywhere I received the cordial cooperation of the people in my administrative work, and the sympathy and support which I received from Mahomedan zamindars and the Mahomedan population generally enabled me to administer with some degree of success such vast and difficult districts as Backergunj and Mymensingh. But what I wish specially to mention is that in these Mahomedan districts the Government always employed a number of able Mahomedan Deputy Collectors to advise and help the District Officer in his work; and in all questions relating to the social and economic conditions of the Mahomedan people, and to their public feelings and religious sentiments, I received the most valuable help and advice from my Mahomedan colleagues in the work of administration. Gentlemen, the duties and responsibilities of a District Officer are humble compared to the manifold duties and high responsibilities of a Viceroy or the Governor of a Province; and I therefore often ask myself if those statesmen do not sometimes feel, as we, humble District Officers.

always felt, that it would help and improve administration to have a few true representatives of the people by their side and in their Executive Councils. And I cannot help replying to myself that the advice and help of some Indian colleagues would greatly strengthen the hands of wise and sympathetic statesmen in solving the great problems which lie before them, none of which is more momentous and more pressing than the condition of the Indian agriculturist and the Indian manufacturer.

Gentlemen, from whatever point of view I examine the question, whether in the light of European history, or of the spirit of British institutions, or of the requirements for good government for India, I feel convinced that to associate the people of India more largely in shaping the administration of the country is not only the wisest but the only possible path before us. It is true we have not been moving onwards in this path in recent years; we have actually stepped backwards in these years of misfortunes and calamities and panic; we have been deprived of those rights and privileges which we secured in years of wise and sympathetic administration. But such years of retrograde movement come to all nations from time to time, even to those who are most advanced. Remember England at the close of the last century, when to talk of political reforms was punished as sedition and crime, when coercive measures were passed to stop public meetings, when reactionary laws were enacted to restrict the liberties of Englishmen. The panic passed away after the Napoleonic wars were over, and the Reforms came in 1832. The reactionary period through which we are passing will end before long, and wise English statesmen will perceive in the future, as they have perceived in the past, that England's duty and England's interests are the same in India. to consolidate

British rule by extending, not restricting Self-Government, by conciliating, not alienating a vast and civilised nation.

Gentlemen, it is possible to avert distress and disasters and deaths from famines, to spread prosperity and contentment and peace, and to evoke the zealous and loyal and spontaneous support of a grateful nation, only by conceding to the people, with due and proper safeguards, the rights of Self-Government. It is not possible, without such concession, without admitting the people to a real share in the control of their own affairs, to save India from distress and discontent, from impoverishment and famines. Therefore, as an old and faithful servant of the Indian Government, I have thought it my duty to raise my voice and urge the adoption of the better and the wiser course, the only course which can save our country from preventible misfortunes and disasters, and can consolidate the British Rule in India.



#### APPENDIX IV

### PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS AT THE FIRST INDIAN INDUSTRIAL CONFERENCE, BENARES, THE 30TH DECEMBER, 1905

You have done me high honour by selecting me President of this First Industrial Conference held in India in connection with the National Congress. Impressed with the growing need for the expansion of our industries, that great and representative body held an Industrial Exhibition from year to year; all classes of manufacturers, European and Indian, have sent in their goods to these Exhibitions; and the Government of India and Provincial Governments have generously helped and fostered their growth. This year, you have taken a new departure; you have felt that beyond exhibiting our goods we might, as practical men, compare notes with each other in reference to the various industries with which we may be familiar; and you have resolved therefore to hold an Industrial Conference as a necessary adjunct to the Industrial Exhibition. For the rest, the object of this Conference is the same as that of the Industrial Exhibition, *viz.*, the promotion of Indian Industries. We meet here today, not to discuss political or social questions, but purely industrial questions; and we invite practical suggestions from practical men of all classes, —Hindu and European, Mahomedan and Parsee,—who are familiar with various Indian trades and industries.

## TWO EXTREME VIEWS : THE TRUTH LIES MIDWAY

Gentlemen, there are two extreme views often expressed about our Indian industries, both of which I believe to be wrong. One is a despondent view,—a cry of despair,—that Indian industries have no future against European competition, and that India is sinking lower and lower as a purely agricultural country. The other is a roseate view,—that the trade of India is increasing by leaps and bounds under the British rule, and that the increasing figures of Indian imports and exports are an index to the growth of Indian manufactures and of the prosperity of the people. I have seen the first view,—the despondent view,—expressed in its extremest form in our Indian newspapers. And I have heard the second view expressed in meetings held in London by Englishmen, who naturally take the trade figures as an index to the prosperity of a nation.

As usual, the truth lies midway. We are beset with grave difficulties, but we have no reason to despair. Our industrial condition in the present day is lamentable, but it is not hopeless. We have to face a severe, and in some respects an unequal, competition, but our future is in our own hands if we face our difficulties like men. Let us, to use an expressive phrase of Dr. Johnson, clear ourselves of cant; let us examine our position impartially and soberly as practical men.

Our difficulties are of a two-fold nature. In the first place our old industries have undoubtedly declined, and we have to recover lost ground. In the second place we have to recover our position under exceptional economic conditions which few nations on earth have to face. Our two

difficulties may be briefly described thus :—Firstly, other competitors have got the start of us; and secondly, we are unfairly handicapped in the race.

### OUR FIRST DIFFICULTY

It would serve no useful purpose to narrate at length the manner in which our old industries have declined in a competition which was not altogether fair. I have written largely on this subject in my published works, and may only briefly refer to a few facts today. For many centuries past, the manufactures of India were prized in the markets of Europe and Asia; and Arab and Portuguese merchants, Dutch and English traders, shipped large consignments of Indian goods to various ports in the world. In those days there was no thought of repressing Indian industries; on the contrary it was the interest of the foreign traders to foster them, as far as it was in their power to do so, because the excellence and the largeness of Indian manufactures were the sources of their own gain and profit.

But when England acquired political power in India in the middle of the eighteenth century.—this policy was reversed. Englishmen were manufacturers themselves, and it was their policy in those days to repress the manufactures of their own Colonies in order to promote their own. The same policy was unfortunately pursued in India; and, for the first time in the history of India, her manufacturing industries were discouraged instead of being encouraged. The export of Indian manufactures to Europe was repressed by prohibitive duties, and the import of English manufactures into India was facilitated by the levy of almost nominal duties. The idea was to make India a country of raw produce for the promotion of English

manufacturing industries. The British manufacturer, in the words of the historian H. H. Wilson, "employed the arm of political injustice to keep down, and ultimately strangle, a competitor with whom he could not have contended on equal terms."

Among all the Indian Industries of the eighteenth century, the textile industry was the most extensive; and the invention of the power-loom in England completed the ruin of that industry which a system of unfair tariffs had begun. I do not wish to place before you elaborate statements today, but a few figures showing the decline of our cotton manufactures in the first quarter of the 19th century, have a melancholy interest.

The export of cotton piece goods from Calcutta to the United Kingdom was over 6,000 bales in 1801, over 14,000 in 1802, and over 13,000 bales in 1803; it never reached a thousand bales after 1826. The export of the same goods from Calcutta to America was over 13,000 bales in 1801; it dwindled to less than 300 bales by 1829. Denmark took over 1,400 bales in 1800, but never took more than 150 bales after 1820. Portugal took nearly 10,000 bales in 1799, but never took over a thousand bales after 1825. And the exports to the Arabian and Persian Gulfs, which rose to between four and seven thousand bales between 1810 and 1820, never exceeded 2,000 bales after 1825. The export of cotton piece goods from Calcutta to the different countries of the earth practically disappeared within the first quarter of the nineteenth century, and what was true of Calcutta was true of every other port in India.

It is needless to say that, while the export of cotton goods from India declined, the import of cotton goods into India from Europe rose by leaps and bounds. By 1858, which was the year when the late Queen assumed the direct

administration of India, the value of cotton goods imported into India had reached nearly 5 million pounds sterling. By 1877, which was the year when Her Gracious Majesty assumed the title of Empress of India, the value of the cotton goods imported into India had reached nearly 16 million sterling. This steady increase in the import of cotton piece goods is often quoted as a mark of India's increasing prosperity. But is there any practical man in India who does not see in these figures the decline of the most extensive of Indian industries, and therefore a loss in the wealth of the nation? I will not dwell longer on this point; I have said enough to show how we have lost ground in the past; I will now turn to our second difficulty, the economic conditions which we have to face in our endeavour to recover our position.

### OUR SECOND DIFFICULTY

Gentlemen, we will not consent to see our country made a land of raw produce, or a dumping ground for the manufactures of other nations. I do not believe a country can permanently prosper by agriculture alone any more than a country can permanently prosper by manufactures alone; the two must thrive side by side to give employment to the population of a country. I do not envy the position of England today which has so far neglected her agriculture as to be dependent on foreign nations for her food supply; that state of things cannot last for ever. On the other hand I do not appreciate the position of our own country which is dependent on foreign countries for most of the manufactured articles required for daily use. We must rescue her from that unhappy position, but in order to do so, we must clearly see and understand the difficulties we have to face.

In the first place we have to change an ancient and time-honoured habit, the habit of carrying on our industries in our homes and cottages. India is a country of cottage industries. Each agriculturist tills his own little field, pays his rent, and transmits his holding to his son. Each humble weaver, with the aid of his wife and children, adjusts his warp and works his loom. I am myself partial to this cottage industry. The tillers of the soil, who own their little plots of land from generation to generation, are more dignified beings than the labourers who live on their landlord's vast estate, and earn only the wages of labour. The humble weavers, working with their wives and children in their homes, live better and more peaceful lives than men and women working in crowded and unwholesome factories. The dignity of man is seen at its best when he works in his own field or his own cottage,—not when he is employed as a part of a vast machine which seems to crush out all manhood and womanhood in the operatives. I have seen many of the largest cotton mills of Lancashire, and the thousands of factory lads and factory girls employed there; and I would not like to see any very large proportion of our labourers so employed. And those who ought to know tell us that the fresh air of the country is the best suited for building up strong constitutions, and that a race deteriorates when it neglects rustic industry and lives mostly in towns. But nevertheless, while we may avoid the mistake of sending all our population to towns, we must at the same time learn to create large centres of industry in towns. We must change our old habit of universal cottage industries, and learn to form Companies, erect Mills and adopt the methods of combined action, if we desire to protect or revive our industries.

But the formation of Companies and the erection of



Mills requires capital, and the conditions in India are not favourable to the accumulation of capital. I do not wish to travel into political subjects today, but it is necessary to mention, what is known to every one of you, that the sources of wealth in this country are not as broad and spacious as in happier countries. Our land is more heavily taxed than it is in England or America or Japan, and the land tax in most Provinces is enhanced at each recurring Settlement. Our revenue is not all spent in India, a large portion of it is remitted for Home Charges, year after year. And the highest and most lucrative appointments in the Empire are not open to us. All these facts tell against the accumulation of capital needed for large enterprises, and our moneyed men are poor compared to those in other lands. A man owning half a lac of rupees is considered a rich man in India, while a man with only three thousand pounds in funds would hardly be deemed to have a decent competence in England.

Lastly, there is the difficulty about our fiscal legislation which is oftener controlled by Lancashire than by us in this country. You all remember how Lord Lytton's Government was compelled to repeal the import duties on cotton goods against the advice and the vote of every Member of Lord Lytton's Council except Sir John Strachey and the Military Member. And when the import duties were reimposed, you remember how Lord Elgin's Government was compelled to impose an excise duty on the mill-produce of India to conciliate Lancashire. I know of no act in modern fiscal legislation more unwise and hurtful to an infant industry than the imposition of an excise tax, unknown in any civilised country. And I know of nothing more humiliating to the Government of a great Empire like India than the correspondence which you will



find recorded in Parliamentary Blue Books, leading to these fiscal changes.

### HOW WE HAVE FACED THESE DIFFICULTIES

These, then, are the difficulties before us. In the first place, we have lagged behind, and have to recover lost ground. And in the second place, we have to run the race with the triple disadvantage of want of modern industrial training, want of capital, and want of control over our own fiscal legislation. I mention these difficulties not to discourage you, but because we have to face and conquer them. Few countries on earth would have succeeded under these difficulties, but I have faith in the capacities of our nation, in the patience and skill of our artisans, in the adaptability of our race to new methods, in the resources of this wonderful land, and in the advantages of cheap labour. I have been something of an optimist all my life; I think it better to fight and to fail than not to fight at all; but in this industrial movement I believe we are destined to fight and to conquer. I have no patience with those of my countrymen who throw up their hands in despair, and declare that all is lost! The history of the last twenty or thirty years shows that all is not lost, and that much has been gained.

Turning once more to the cotton industry, you are aware that we have adopted the power-looms invented in England, and have started mills in Bombay, in Nagpur, and in Ahmedabad, which are yearly increasing in number and in business, and promise in the near future to supply to a large extent the requirements of India. The handloom has not yet died out in India and is not destined to die

out; under the improvements effected by such friends and well-wishers of India as Mr. Chatterton, Mr. Churchill and Mr. Havell, it has more than doubled its out-put and promises to hold its own yet in the villages and rural tracts of India. Seri-culture and silk weaving are on the increase, and the demand for Indian silk is increasing in India from year to year. Woollen mills have been started in the Punjab and Northern India by enterprising Englishmen whom I reckon among our true benefactors; and the woollen stuff which most of you are wearing today and which I wear today, have been manufactured in India. Jute industry is increasing in Bengal by leaps and bounds, and before long jute will largely enter into fabrics woven in India. The aluminium industry is a new invention which has a great future; and the enamelled ironware of Europe will never replace our brass and copper articles, the use of which is rather on the increase than decreasing.

Lastly, coal and iron, which are the most effective means of extending all modern industries, are being worked in increasing quantities from year to year, and new iron ores have been discovered in Orissa which promise favourable returns. The possibilities of electricity being employed in manufacturing industries are also as great in India as in any country.

The figures given below shew that the production of Cotton and Woollen goods has increased nearly a hundred per cent and fifty per cent, respectively, in recent years :

		1896-97	1904-05
		lbs.	lbs.
Cotton goods	..	82,933,000	158,747,000
		1894	1903
		lbs.	lbs.
Woollen goods	..	1,657,000	2,977,000

Gentlemen, these are some of the results which we have achieved in recent years, and all classes of men, Hindu and Musalman, Englishman and Parsee, have helped in the onward march. I make bold to say that no other country in Asia, except Japan, has shewn such industrial progress within the lifetime of a generation; and no country on earth, labouring under the disadvantages from which we suffer, could have shewn more adaptability to modern methods, more skill, more patient industry, more marked success.

### THE SWADESHI MOVEMENT

And now, at the commencement of the Twentieth Century, we are more resolved than ever not to be beaten in this industrial race. I see in the faces of those who fill this hall today strong determination that—God helping—we will work out our own salvation by our own hands. Men educated in English Schools and Colleges in India, men trained in the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford, have come to share this noble work with practical manufacturers and traders in India. And today there is a desire which is spreading all over India, that by every legitimate means, by every lawful endeavour, we will foster and stimulate the use of our own manufactures among the vast millions who fill this great Continent.

Gentlemen, I am drifting into a subject which has raised much angry discussion when I speak of the Swadeshi Movement. And yet I would not be fulfilling the duty which you have imposed upon me today, if I passed silently over that subject which is in every man's thoughts. I speak in the presence of some who are among the leaders of this movement in Bengal, and I speak from personal know-

ledge when I say, that these leaders have tried their very utmost to conduct this movement lawfully and peacefully to the best interests of the people and of the Government. If there have been any isolated instances of disturbance, here and there, we deprecate such acts. On the other hand, if the Government have, in needless panic, been betrayed into measures of unwise repression, we deplore such measures. But neither the rare instances of disturbance, nor the unwise measures of repression, are a part and parcel of the Swadeshi Scheme. The essence of the scheme, as I understand it, is, by every lawful method, to encourage and foster home industries, and to stimulate the use of home manufactures among all classes of people in India. Gentlemen, I sympathise with this movement with all my heart, and will cooperate with this movement with all my power.

Gentlemen, the Swadeshi Movement is one which all nations on earth are seeking to adopt in the present day. Mr. Chamberlain is seeking to adopt it by a system of Protection, Mr. Balfour seeks to adopt it by a scheme of Retaliation, France, Germany, the United States, and all British Colonies adopt it by building up a wall of prohibitive duties. We have no control over our fiscal legislation, and we adopt the Swadeshi Scheme therefore by a laudable resolution to use our home manufactures, as far as practicable, in preference to foreign manufactures. I see much that is praiseworthy and much that is beneficial. It will certainly foster and encourage our industries in which the Indian Government has always professed the greatest interest. It will relieve millions of weavers and other artisans from a state of semi-starvation in which they have lived, will bring them back to their handloom and other industries, and will minimise the terrible effects of famines

which the Government have always endeavoured to relieve to the best of their power. It will give a new impetus to our manufactures which need such impetus; and it will see us, in the near future, largely dependent on articles of daily use prepared at home, rather than articles imported from abroad. In one word, it will give a new life to our industrial enterprises; and there is nothing which the people of India and the Government of India desire more earnestly than to see Indian industries flourish, and the industrial classes prosper.

Therefore, I sincerely trust that the Swadeshi Movement will live and extend in every Province and in every village in India. There should be Associations formed in every District to extend and perpetuate this movement, and to stimulate the use of country-made cloth and country-made articles, not only in towns, but in rural villages. Such Associations should peacefully and quietly extend their operations from year to year, disregarding the jeers of their critics, and braving the wrath of their opponents. Spasmodic and hysterical exhibitions should be avoided, for, as a great English writer remarks, strength consists not in spasms but in the stout bearing of burdens. Mindful of the great work we have to perform, we should work with the calm consciousness of doing our duty towards our countrymen. If we succeed in this noble endeavour, we shall present to the world an instance, unparalleled in the history of modern times, of a nation protecting its manufactures and industries without protective duties. If we fail in this endeavour, and prove ourselves false to the resolutions we have formed and professed, then we shall deserve to remain in that state of industrial serfdom to other nations from which we are struggling to be free.

## PROGRESS OF INDUSTRIES IN NATIVE STATES

And now, Gentlemen, in concluding my remarks to-day, I think I should say a word or two about the progress of industries in Native States, which are not by any means backward in comparison with British Provinces. You have heard of the great endeavours made in Mysore to foster industries in all directions by modern methods. You have heard of the growing silk industry of Kashmir, and of the many flourishing industries of other States in India. And you have probably heard something also of the State which I have, at present, the honour of serving.

Gentlemen, the State of Baroda has the good fortune of being ruled by one of the most enlightened Princes in India. And no part of his administration receives his more earnest attention than the fostering of industries in the State. Over twenty years ago, when the people of Baroda scarcely knew the value and importance of cotton mills, His Highness the Gaekwar of Baroda started a State Mill to educate the people by an object lesson, as it were. And now that the importance of cotton mills is so largely appreciated, the Maharaja has transferred the State Mill into private hands in order to foster private enterprise. Nor is he disappointed in his anticipations;—the success of one mill under private ownership has encouraged other capitalists; new companies have been formed and new mills are starting into existence; and before long we hope to be able to supply the needs of a large portion of the people of Baroda, and outside Baroda.

Handlooms still have a great future, and the Gaekwar of Baroda has established a school of weaving which teaches the use of improved handlooms, brought from Bengal, from Ahmednagar and elsewhere, to a large number of



students. It is hoped that these weaver boys, when they have learnt the lessons, will introduce the improved hand-loom in their own villages, and in all weaving centres.

We have a Technical Institute which teaches mechanical industries to all classes of students. The success of this institute is so pronounced that the Government of the Central Provinces of India grants scholarships to boys of those Provinces to proceed to Baroda and learn industries there.

One Baroda student, educated at this Technical Institute, has started a dyeing factory which sends out large quantities of dyed clothes to all parts of India, and even to Rangoon. Another Baroda man, educated in Europe, has started a chocolate factory which, I hope, will soon send delightful little packets to little children in all parts of India. And an ingenious District Officer in Baroda, who also received his education in Europe, has been successful in the preparation of cigarettes from Baroda tobacco, and is now busy with the manufacture of matches, —I suppose for lighting his own cigarettes!

Gentlemen, those of you who have been over the Exhibition Grounds will have seen some Baroda girls who are making laces for use by our Indian ladies. And when I add that students have been sent, this year, from Baroda to Europe, to America, and to Japan, at State expense, to learn different industries, you will admit that the quiet, retiring, and silent worker, who rules Baroda, is not the least earnest and patriotic among the many earnest and patriotic men, who are devoting themselves today to foster and revive the industries of India.



## APPENDIX V

### A LIST OF FAMINES, 1769 TO 1898

1769-70	.	.	.	The Great Bengal Famine.
1783	.	.	.	Madras and Bombay; mortality not recorded.
1784	.	.	.	Upper India; mortality not recorded.
1792	.	.	.	Bombay, Madras, Deccan and South India generally.
1802-3	.	.	.	Bombay; excessive mortality.
1803-4	.	.	.	U. P. and Rajputana.
1805-7	.	.	.	Madras; excessive mortality.
1811-14	.	.	.	Madras; not serious; Bombay, severe but no estimates of mortality.
1812-13	.	.	.	Rajputana; exceedingly severe; mortality probably 1-1/2 to 2 millions.
1823	.	.	.	Madras, deaths were of frequent occurrence.
1824-25	.	.	.	U.P. & Bombay; great scarcity not amounting to famine.
1833-34	.	.	.	North Madras; excessive mortality, in some districts nearly 50 per cent of the population perished.
1833-34	.	.	.	Bombay; scarcity but no famine.
1837-38	.	.	.	Upper India, mortality nearly 1 million.
1854	.	.	.	Madras.
1860-61	.	.	.	U.P. and Punjab; mortality not less than 50,000.

1865-66	.	.	Orissa; mortality in 6 districts alone amounted to 13,00,000.
1884-85	.	.	Bengal, Bihar, Chota Nagpur, Bellary and Anantpur districts of Madras.
1886-87	.	.	Central Provinces.
1888-89	.	.	Bihar.
1889	.	.	Tributary States of Orissa.
1888-89	.	.	Ganjam in Madras province; much suffering. The vital statistics for these years and 1890 show an additional mortality of 1-1/2 million.
1890	.	.	Kamaon and Garhwal.
1892	.	.	Almora and Garhwal.
1891-92	.	.	Madras and Bombay; Deccan and Bengal; Ajmer and Marwar; figures of All India mortality for 1891 and 1892 are 16,20,000 above normal.
1895-97	.	.	U.P., Bengal, C.P., Madras, Punjab, mortality, above normal in 1895, was 12,00,000 in 1896; thus total mortality about 65,50,000.
1898	.	.	A so-called non-famine year shows an excess mortality of 6,50,000.

# APPENDIX VI

## FAMINE DEATHS IN INDIA

(1865—1901)

Year	Area	Mortality
1865-66	Bihar and N. Bengal	1,35,000
1865-66	Madras	4,50,000
1865-69	Rajputana	12,50,000
1865-69	U.P.	6,00,000
1865-69	Punjab	6,00,000
1865-69	C. P.	2,50,000
1865-69	Bombay	Not given, extensive emigration
1873-74	Bengal and Bihar	Not given
1873-74	U. P.	Not given
1876-77	Bombay	Estimates vary between 8,00,000 to 10,00,000.
1876-77	Hyderabad	70,000
1876-78	Madras and U.P.	Noteworthy for the imposition of "lb. ration", later withdrawn ; the most terrible famine to that date known in India; the mortality was estimated by the Famine Commissioner in S. India at 52,50,000, though probably it was much more. Elsewhere it was 3 million. Total 82,50,000.

Year	Area	Mortality
1876-78	Mysore (then under British Administration)	11,00,000.
1880	Deccan, S. Bombay, C. P. and Hyderabad	High prices, no relief measures, mortality not given.
1880	U. P.	High prices, no relief measures, mortality not given.
1884	South and S. E. Punjab	Mortality not stated but vital statistics show an increase in deaths over previous years by 7,50,000.
1899-1900	Most of the country west of Ganges, from the borders of Kashmir to Mysore with spots in Madras and from Sind to Orissa boundary.	Crops and incidental losses estimated at £150 million; most widely extended and most terrible famine, according to Lord Curzon, known in Indian history; Mortality (official) 1,25,00,000, but the actual three or four times this.
1900	Rajpur District	40 per cent population on relief.
1901	Gujarat, Deccan, Bombay, Karnatak, part of Madras, S. Punjab.	At least 7,50,000. Total admitted (official) mortality in 47 years (1854-1901) is 2,88,25,000.

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